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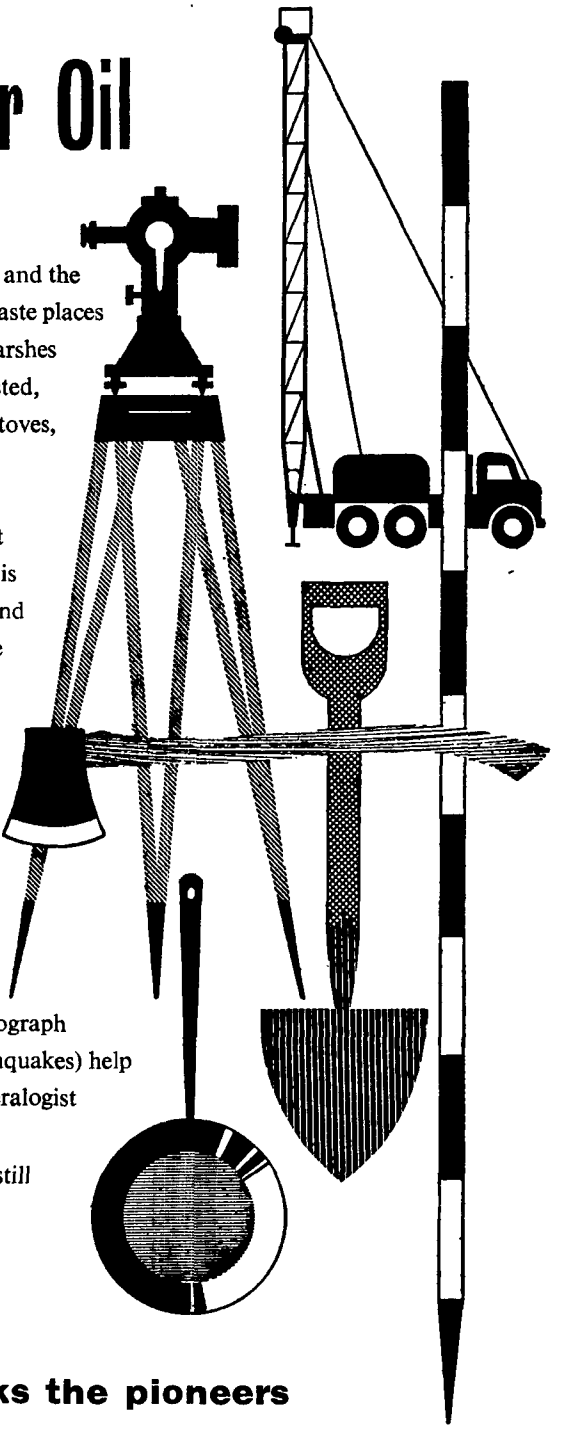

TO THE OILMEN of today goes the credit, and the adventure, of opening up many of the waste places of the earth. Under deserts, prairies, marshes and seas, otherwise bleak and unharvested, may lie oil. Oil for lamps, for cooking stoves, for industry, for farming, for the world on wheels, the ships and aircraft of all nations. The oilmen must always go out and find new sources of supply, so great is the demand. They must drill the wasteland to dredge up the liquid treasure that the earth holds imprisoned.

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Herbert Read

The Drift of Modern Poetry

WE ARE sufficiently advanced into the 20th century to ask whether the poetry of our period has acquired any significant character. Its achievement, in a quantitative sense, is impressive: we should have to go back to the Elizabethan age for any comparable efflorescence. But we must not forget that English is now the native language of at least two hundred and fifty million people, most of them acquiring some standard of literacy as a birthright, whereas the great wealth of Elizabethan poetry was created by a small society not numbering, among its literate, more than a few thousands. If averages were of any account in this connection, our present rating would be miserably low.

The truth is that both numbers and literacy have been handicaps to poetry in our time. If we suppose that a law of probability would allow one genuine poet to every thousand children born, then twenty poets would stand a better chance of being listened to in a population of twenty thousand than would a hundred and fifty thousand poets in a population of a hundred and fifty million. Some principle of diminishing returns operates in literature no less than in economics. Indeed, our civilisation is so organised that the larger it grows and the more literate it is made, the more uniform it becomes in its opinions and the more liable to irrational hero-worship. It prefers to be represented by *one* great man, to crowd to the concerts of *one* great conductor, to the performances of *one* leading actor, and, finally, to recognise *one* great poet as the representative of its collective taste. A critical discrimination that would estimate particular merits and give due attention to individual qualities is nowadays more often to be found on the racecourse than on the campus—and even there the public, left to itself, will select a favourite upon whom it will lavish irrational odds. The Elizabethans did have their favourite poets, but each was held to be as good as the other until proved otherwise. The apotheosis of a poet like Shakespeare was the work of later ages, and chiefly of our own.

My intention is not to deflate any of the great reputations of our own century, but if we are to arrive at an estimate of general characteristics we must take care not to be dazzled by individual glories. No poet has dominated our age, in the sense of giving to it a uniform direction or a uniform technique. If uniformity exists, it is in public opinion and not in poetic style. We might use the word *drift* to describe our course, a derogatory word no doubt, but one exactly descriptive of the tides and currents of poetic expression in our time. The so-called "age of Johnson" was an age rich in dogmatism, but poor in invention, the least original age in our literary history. If our own epoch has not been dominated by a single poet, much less has it submitted to a single critic, though there are plenty who wish it had been, and some who would dearly love to occupy the throne of the Great Cham. But we are now a literate democracy, and what we have to deplore is the dictatorship, not of an individual, whether poet or critic, but of a uniformly educated taste.

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THE poetry of our century began on a soft and sensuous note, as if tired of its inheritance, timid to advance into new estates. The Victorian energy—the exuberance of a Browning or a Swinburne—had been expended. We listen to the weary voice of Arthur Symons's "Absinthe Drinker":

> Gently I wave the visible world away.
> Far off I hear a roar, afar yet near,
> Far off and strange, a voice is in my ear,
> And is the voice my own? The words I say
> Fall strangely, like a dream, across the day;
> And the dim sunshine is a dream . . .
>
> I am at peace with God and man. O glide,
> Sands of the hour-glass that I count not, fall
> Serenely: scarce I feel your soft caress,
> Rocked on this dreamy and indifferent tide.

This *fin de siècle* mood, with its concordant diction, dominated the first decade of the century. The visible world was alien. True, there were exceptions—the pessimistic poetry of Hardy, the realism of Kipling, the social protest of John Davidson. But these were particular sentiments, individual opinions, not part of the poetic essence of the period. Even in Hardy we find the same tired rhythms:

> I idly cut a parsley stalk,
> And blew therein towards the moon;
> I had not thought what ghosts would walk
> With shivering footsteps to my tune.
>
> I went, and knelt, and scooped my hand
> As if to drink, into the brook,
> And a faint figure seemed to stand
> Above me, with the bygone look.
>
> I lipped rough rhymes of chance, not choice,
> I thought not what my words might be;
> There came into my ear a voice
> That turned a tenderer verse for me.

The lassitude is in that tenderer verse, in moods of regret that inevitably fall into accents of the whispering gallery, ghostly echoes of the past. The only alternative for Hardy is an awkward artificiality—the artificiality of those lines on the loss of the "Titanic," where the "steel chambers" of the modern ocean liner are seen as "stilly crouching" "in a solitude of the sea," "the pyres" of "salamandrine fires." The image of "this creature of cleaving wing" fatefully converging on "a Shape of Ice" is well conceived, well realised, but the accompanying machinery of an Immanent Will and a Spinner of the Years is a creaking structure copied from Schopenhauer, who designed it after a Greek model. It is not poetic—or rather, it is rhetorical, and like all rhetoric, a corruption of the poetic consciousness.

This same corruption of consciousness exists in two further figures who survived well into our century—Housman and Kipling. The tragic sense is keen in each, and when the war came their poetic interventions did not strike the participant as too unreal. But nevertheless, there is a factitiousness in both. Blood and sweat, spade and hearse, lad and lass, life and death—the antitheses are too easy—semantic marriages, not made in any passionate heaven or hell. True poetry is not so immaculate in diction. It is concentrated; it is crystalline; but its edges are sharp and cutting. Kipling knew this, and when he wasn't, as Henry James said, telling a story in the Smoke Room, his metaphysical awareness was condensed into perfect images,

> If any God should give
> Us leave to fly
> These present deaths we live
> And safely die
> In those last lives we lived ere we were born—
> What man but would not laugh the excuse to scorn?
>
> For we are what we are—
> So broke to blood
> And the strict works of war—
> So long subdued
> To sacrifice, that threadbare Death commands
> Hardly observance at our busier hands.
>
> Yet we were what we were,
> And, fashioned so,
> It pleases us to stare
> At the far show
> Of unbelievable years and shapes that flit,
> In our own likeness, on the edge of it.

Such a poem is not our century, in any specific sense: in form it might belong to the 17th century. The difficult thought is realised in a clear image, and the rhythm winds round the thought with geometrical exactitude. Such an achievement belongs to the universal types of

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poetry, and is exempt from the limitations of the *Zeitgeist*.

THERE exist archetypal images which belong to all time, and which may be transferred from language to language without undue loss. If Kipling's poem were to be skilfully translated into Greek or Latin, French or German, it would not lose its poetic effect, because that effect is metaphysical—idea realised in image, thought felt. The thought process is primary, not in the sense that the poet thinks and then seeks a poetic form of expression for his thought (this is the recipe for bad poetry), but in the sense that the particular poet is a thinker and his thought takes poetic form in the act of expression. This is a rare combination, for the poet is more usually a sensationalist, or possibly an intuitionist, and reacts directly through his imagination—he uses a symbolic rather than a conceptual form of discourse. His activity, we say, is lyrical. Though many images are archetypal, or universal, and reappear repeatedly throughout the course of world literature, the characteristic images of any age are more immediate and sensuous, a direct reaction to individual experience. The archetypal images are not individual in this sense—they are at once collective and unconscious, and any conscious attempt to tap them is apt to produce an effect of banality. The ship of death, for example, is an archetypal image—it occurs in the myths of several cultures, and is particularly familiar to our own cultural tradition in the form of Charon's boat. When, therefore, D. H. Lawrence takes this image as the basis of one of his most ambitious poems, he is under the necessity of reanimating it if he is to avoid the effect of banality. He tries to do this by combining his main universal image with subsidiary and more personal images: the image of the falling apple, that falls to bruise itself an exit from itself—a metaphor for the bruised body, from whose bruised exit the soul oozes. It is doubtful if he is entirely successful—the new and personal image might have been more effective if it had not been associated with an old and familiar image.

The borrowed images in modern poetry are not always so familiar as Lawrence's Ship of Death. One of the most consistent features of the whole period is its eclecticism—its willingness to search out and incorporate the symbols and myths of past ages. Some degree of eclecticism is characteristic of all historic cultures—distance lends enchantment to the past, and the enchantment is all the stronger the more distant the time. All the poets of our English tradition, from Chaucer to Eliot, have freely borrowed the forms and figures of other cultures. But there is an important distinction to be made at this point, a distinction between assimilation and accretion. When a Shakespeare takes a plot or even a metaphor from Plutarch or Ovid, he absorbs it into his own poetic system, and reproduces it in the terms of his own poetic essence. It is not merely a question of playing Julius Cæsar in Elizabethan costume: Julius Cæsar *is* an Elizabethan—more than that: he is a projection of Shakespeare's own multiple personality. But when Pound and Eliot take the structure of Greek drama as a framework for their poetic sentiments, they are avoiding the problem of creating a contemporary structure. *Hamlet* is a significant play, not because it relates the tragedy of a Danish prince of the Middle Ages, but because it uses this dim figment of the chronicles as an excuse to present the doubts and indecisions of a humanistic age. "The Waste Land," the most eclectic of Eliot's works, is a mythical landscape, a landscape of broken columns and discarded masks, into which no hero intrudes. Pound's "Cantos," are cluttered with literary stage-props. All is academic vanity. The poet claims that it is not vanity

> To have gathered from the air a live tradition
> or from a fine old eye the unconquered flame
> This is not vanity.
> Here error is all in the not done,
> all in the diffidence that faltered.

But the diffidence faltered because it could not fuse the tradition to a modern sensibility—to a consciousness of the modern dilemma. Eliot became aware of that necessity and in the *Four Quartets* redeemed his eclecticism, not in a new myth, but in "aftersight and foresight," in

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metaphysics, like Kipling (a comparison he would not find objectionable). Again, the words caress the contour of the thought—

> . . . words I never thought to speak
> In streets I never thought I should revisit
> When I left my body on a distant shore.

Our eclecticism has been part of a deliberate attempt to provide the 20th century with mythical poetry, ignoring the fact that a myth cannot be consciously imported into a culture, but must emerge gradually from the collective unconscious. When I am informed that Ezra Pound's "Cantos" repeat the pattern of Homer's *Iliad*, or that *The Cocktail Party* has the same dramatic pattern as some play by Euripides, I refuse to be intimidated. All that is merely in line, it seems to me, with the repetition, on some American campus, of the architecture of an Oxford college.

WE MAY conclude that there is no characteristic myth of our age, and that we are not likely to find one where we are looking—in the overt attempts of the poets to create one. We must therefore look for the peculiar virtues of our poetry in its poetic structure—in its diction, idiom, and imagery. We shall at once be aware of a difference from the poetry of other ages.

Let us begin with the image, for that is the original sense-experience of the poet. The poet is original in that he sees things for the first time in a metaphorical relation, either to other things, or to his own feelings. But admittedly it is very difficult to isolate the image as a visual event: it is inevitably expressed in words and we are immediately in doubt about the visuality of the image. In Hardy's poem, which I quoted, the reader may have been struck by the unusual image of the parsley stalk. No poet of our Augustan age would have given such prominence to such a humble plant. Did Hardy depart from poetic usage because his discerning eye had selected the parsley stalk as an object of visual beauty or formal significance, and as such apt for the desired effect of his poem? Or did the phrase, "a parsley stalk," strike his aural sensibility as poetically forceful and expressive? Did eye or ear dictate the image? Impossible to say, but in any case a new image had been introduced into English poetry, and it is an image characteristic of a certain phase of 20th century poetry—the phase we call "Georgian" in England.

> . . . the yellow flavorous coat
> Of an apple wasps had undermined . . .
> *Edward Thomas*

> Soft as a bubble sung
> Out of a linnet's lung
> *Ralph Hodgson*

Robert Frost will perhaps serve as the transatlantic equivalent:

> . . . ploughing the grain
> With a thick thumbnail to show it ran
> Across the handle's long drawn serpentine,
> Like the two strokes across a dollar sign.

It is true that one may find visual acuity of the same kind in earlier poets—in Marvell, Cotton, Wordsworth, Hopkins—but the objects or actions observed are more conventional, less violent. Wordsworth's acuity is exercised on common objects—on daisies and daffodils—and I doubt if he would have thought a wasp-eaten apple or a bubble or a dollar sign as images worthy of his poetry. His aim was to endow earthly objects with a celestial light; to transfuse matter and spirit; to identify his sensational vision with his mystical vision. The Nature poets of the 20th century are not idealists in this sense, but empiricists. They are satisfied—in so far as they are typical of their time—with the sensory effects of the image, though such an image may be used in a descriptive or sentimental poem where it lies embedded like a barbaric stone in a circlet of gold. It was probably the contrast between the sensory image and a traditional diction that first suggested to T. E. Hulme the isolation of the image. If the image could be identified as the only poetic force within a poem, why not proceed to identify poem and image, as had been the common practice in China or Japan? To cut the cackle—that was to be the first aim of a modern poetry.

But Hulme discovered—as certain French poets had discovered before him—that the cackle could not be cut without a fundamental

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change of diction. An image is always jealous of words—that is to say, it is most effective when conveyed in a minimum of words. It proved very difficult to reconcile this minimum with any regular metrical structure, for metre is basically aural and quite independent of imagery. Free verse was not, of course, invented by Hulme, or by anyone else in our century—in some sense it has existed for many centuries, as in Hebrew poetry. Modern experiments began in France about 1880, but these earlier experiments in free verse had been in the interest of rhythm—the desire had been to get away from the monotonous regularity of traditional metres and create new rhythms—rhythms directly expressive of emotional experience. The free verse of Whitman and Henley is of this kind, and is not necessarily accompanied by any particularly vivid imagery.

When therefore Hulme

> saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
> Like a red-faced farmer

he was not merely introducing a sensory image into a poem, but seeking a verse form that would effectively convey the image. Actually, within the limits of seven lines, he found a verse form for a number of images—all images of "Autumn":

> A touch of cold in the Autumn night—
> I walked abroad
> And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
> Like a red-faced farmer.
> I did not stop to speak, but nodded.
> And round about were the wistful stars
> With white faces like town children.

The diction of such a poem is best described as laconic—that is to say, it is just adequate for the occasion. The poetry is in the image, or images, and that, for some time, was to be the distinctive characteristic of 20th century poetry. No other English poetry—no other poetry of the Western World—had hitherto been based so strictly on visual appeal.

THE School of Imagists, which included at one time or another poets like Lawrence and Pound, as well as self-styled Imagists like Aldington and Fling, H. D., Amy Lowell, and John Gould Fletcher, was not destined to survive the interruption and dispersal of the First World War, but its influence on poetic diction was decisive for a whole generation. Even Yeats, through the direct mediation of Ezra Pound, was influenced and for the better. His diction from 1914 onwards is lean, his imagery precise:

> That girls at puberty may find
> The first Adam in their thought
> Shut the door of the Pope's chapel,
> Keep those children out.
> There on that scaffolding reclines
> Michael Angelo.
> With no more sound than the mice make
> His hand moves to and fro.
> Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
> His mind moves upon silence.

Such images, of mice and long-legged flies, will not be found in Yeats's earlier poetry. But it is the substance of Pound's poetry and Eliot's: it is the new imagery of the 20th century. There is no longer an undertone of verbal music, or naturalistic sentiment, as in Hardy's parsley stalk, but a direct appeal to the senses, without benefit of sweet sound—Eliot's patient etherized upon a table, crabs scuttling across the floors of silent seas, newspapers blowing through vacant lots, rats, and broken glass; and Pound's full and fascinating junk-shop.

But such imagery, which might be called Homeric in its directness, is in these two cases contaminated, as it were, by a very un-Homeric eclecticism—by a very unrealistic romanticism, the Classicist and Medievalist romanticism of Eliot, the Troubadour and Orientalist romanticism of Pound. "Eclecticism" is perhaps too superficial in its implications to describe a process that is not deliberate, but rather an automatic release of imagery from what would technically be known as the pre-conscious—that level of the mind just below conscious memory, from which images can be drawn more or less pell-mell in a state of poetic excitement.

> The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
> Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
> Came Christ the tiger

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In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fräulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.
Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

These are personal memory-images, and the odd thing is that they should be transferable, so as to constitute indubitable poetry. We do not know, and need not ask, who were Mr. Silvero and Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist and Fräulein von Kulp; any explanation would render them less effective, less poetic.

Effective as these automatic images are when personal to the poet, nothing is so ineffective as a conscious imitation of them: the introduction into verse of arbitrary images, not preceding from whatever depths the poet's mind possesses, but consciously invented to produce a similar effect. One might even go further and say that even when such images are projected automatically, nothing proves to be so dreary as the furniture of an inferior mind. The surrealist movement was responsible for much forced imagery of this kind, and the process itself, which had been so effective in the case of Eliot (and in the case of certain contemporary French poets) was eventually discredited by abuse. The spontaneous memory-image remains, however, a characteristic feature of modern English poetry, and Eliot's significant role in the technical development of modern verse is largely due to his masterly use of the invention.

IMAGIST development in our period does not end with Pound or even with William Carlos Williams, a poet who has sustained the experimental verve of the early days of the movement. The visual image in his verse is always conveyed without obscuring rhetoric, nakedly:

(the
grapes still hanging to
the vines . . .
like broken
teeth in the head of an
old man)

which, incidentally, is an excellent example of the reversed metaphor so popular with modern poets—the inhuman illuminated by reference to the human. Williams's use and presentation of the image is in the tradition of the Imagist School, but his poetry is not exclusively imagist—he might, indeed, be called a moralist—a laconic commentator on the contemporary American scene. He is exceptional in that he has transferred to a conceptual type of verse ideals of economy and precision that were evolved for a perceptual type of verse. To that visual clarity of the image corresponds a logical definition that takes an aphoristic form.

It might be possible to trace the Imagist influence into wider fields and even to find it in unexpected places, but it gradually became merged in that efflorescence of metaphor which I believe is predominantly Celtic in its origins. Gerard Manley Hopkins, who was partly responsible for it, was strongly influenced by Welsh poetry, and the chief representative of this metaphorical school has been a Welshman, Dylan Thomas. But we must not forget the influence on Thomas of surrealism, and, indirectly through surrealism, of the new significance which began to be attached to the dream image and to automatic projections of the symbols of the unconscious. All those influences created a metaphorical ferment in the mind of this young poet which at first was too private in its references to convey any emotion:

Joy is no knocking nation, sir and madam,
The cancer's fusion, or the summer feather
Lit on the cuddled tree, the cross of fever,
Nor city tar and subway bored to foster
Man through macadam.

Rimbaud wrote such poetry, and it is not surprising to find it transubstantiated in English words. But the reader cannot endure the

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blind fury of it for more than the course of a few stanzas, and Thomas soon realised the limitations of this method. He worked towards simplicity and clarity, without sacrificing any of the force of the far-fetched image.

Her flesh was meek as milk, but this skyward statue
With the wild beast and blessed and giant skull
Is carved from her in a room with a wet window
In a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year.
I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands
Lie with religion in their cramp, her threadbare
Whisper in a damp word, her wits drilled hollow,
Her fist of a face died clenched on a round pain;
And sculptured Ann is seventy years of stone.

There are images here that are specifically modern, in the sense already discussed. "Her fist of a face clenched on a round pain"—I do not think an image like that would have occurred to a poet writing before 1910; though if we skip the centuries we shall find an analogue in Shakespeare's description of the death of Falstaff; and there is Anglo-Saxon sparseness and dinned anvil-clangour in the concentrated monosyllabic words:

. . . her death was a still drop;
She would not have me sink in the holy
Flood of her heart's fame; she would lie dumb and deep
And need no druid of her broken body . . .

DYLAN THOMAS'S images were threaded to coherent themes of birth and death, of love and sorrow—human, universal themes, to which he gave a fresh, contemporary expression. But these few ideas were intuitive —static convictions rather than the products of a philosophical activity. Dylan Thomas is not singular in this respect. It is, indeed, difficult to discern in 20th century poetry any common ideological trend, such as we find in the Romantic Movement from, say, 1780–1830. We have had ideological poets—Mr. Eliot is one. Mr. Pound has a political philosophy and Mr. Auden is dogmatic in an offhand way. But these three typical poets of the period have nothing in common, ideologically speaking, and certainly have no common philosophy of art, such as the Romantics had. Each poet expresses, in a personal way, his private philosophy, and in an age such as ours, when there is no integral social consciousness, we need not pay any particular respect to a philosophy that claims to be universal. Catholic philosophy, for example, is universal for those who have made a personal choice to be orthodox Christians. It was different in the Middle Ages, or in Dante's time, when no personal choice was involved. Catholicism was then an expression of the social consciousness, and the individual was dissolved in that consciousness, and did not assert a separate and personal consciousness. We, who have no integral social consciousness, have only a *Zeitgeist* to substitute for it, and this super-individual manifestation, of which we are rarely conscious, is historical, not universal. It is a product of a particular environment—of economic and social conditions—and after the passage of a generation or two, is seen as a deception.

Romanticism, in its most general sense, is the only attempt since the end of the Middle Ages to construct a universal philosophy. Hegel, in this sense, is a Romantic philosopher. Romanticism is essentially a philosophy of immanence, as Catholicism had been a philosophy of transcendence; it remains a philosophy of immanence when allied to poetry. Poetry, indeed, is an essential instrument of this philosophy, for, as Schelling claimed, the immanent spirit of the universe is manifested through poetry, including the plastic arts and music. Poetry has thus the role of revelation in this immanent religion, and the only universal philosophy of poetry, since the Middle Ages, gives to the poet the priest-like function of meditation.

The Romantic poets of 1780–1830 accepted this role. Goethe and Schiller, Hölderlin and Novalis, Wordsworth and Coleridge, saw themselves as performing a priest-like task, and they sought for the best method of ensuring the immediate communication of their vision. The triumph of materialism in the 19th century brought discredit or ridicule on this Romantic philosophy, but only at the cost of a further and more drastic disintegration of social consciousness. Nietzsche, the last of the great Romantic philosophers, proclaimed the death

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of God; Marx substituted the vision of a society integrated on a basis of common wealth. But poetry in any universal sense had died with God, and all our efforts, since the middle of the 19th century, have been fragmentary and individualistic.

Some of us attempt to recover the universal philosophy of the Middle Ages—to resurrect the transcendental God; others seek to revive the universal philosophy of Romanticism—to recover the pantheistic intuitions of the Romantic poets. But the Romantic poets realised that the act of mediation was a poetic act, and not an intellectual effort. Revelation was made evident in the structure and imagery of poetry. For a short time in our century—the time between the birth of Imagism and the return to traditional forms in the thirties—it seemed as though an effort would be made to recover this immediacy of inspiration, but there was no supporting ethos: what ethos there was came from revolutionary politics, and was essentially anti-poetic; it acted on the false assumption that society could be unified on a materialistic basis. It is too early to proclaim the failure of the new Romanticism—did it not, in Dylan Thomas, produce a poet who continued the tradition on its highest level? But Thomas, though he had a following, is nevertheless an isolated figure—he has no significance for our materialistic civilisation. He wrote "for the love of man and in praise of God," but he wrote in subjective solitude.

Yeats was probably the only poet of our age who had some understanding of the poet's predicament. He has been ridiculed for trying to find a substitute religion in astrology and spiritualism, but his naïve effort is not necessarily more absurd than the attempt to revive a medieval thearchy. He dared, until he was disillusioned, to believe in a rebirth of Gaelic Ireland—free from commercialism and materialism. He may have underestimated the difficulty of effecting any correspondence between a practical level of experience and a symbolic level of experience—between act and grace, achievement and glory, ceremony and innocence. But in the end Yeats knew that just as

> twenty centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed into righteousness by a rocking cradle

So we must await, and might in our darkness expect, a Second Coming—

> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

I HAVE been sparing of names in this survey of the drift of 20th century poetry, but let us look back across the chart for a moment. There was one clear line of progress—the isolation and clarification of the image, and the perfecting of a diction that would leave the image unclouded by rhetoric or sentiment. To that task our greatest poets—Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and Thomas—devoted their best energies. But now there is a failure of nerve: eyes are dazzled, and once again a veil of rhetoric is drawn over the vision of the poet. Sentiment supersedes sensation, the poetic consciousness is corrupted. Many individual voices rise again in the dusk. Yeats dead, Pound silenced, Eliot lost to the theatre, Thomas gone before his time—it is the hour of the twittering machines. We listen to them as we drink our martinis or smoke a cigarette, and for an hour or two we feel content. Then the night comes and there is no voice to fill the silence. That is not as it used to be. Poetry used to be in speech, in transaction, in worship; at the banquet, before the battle, in the moment of birth and burial. Why is poetry no longer our daily bread? We have to search for an answer to this question, and the search leads us to the foundation of our society. We have the poetry we deserve, just as we have the painting we deserve, the music we deserve; and if it is fragmented, personal, spasmodic, we have only to look around us to see the satanic chaos through which nevertheless a few voices have penetrated. The voices are pitched high and may sound discordant; but sometimes they convey an image that has a crystalline brightness and hardness, and cannot be shrouded.

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T. R. Fyvel

The Purposive Society

Notes on a visit to Israel

THE well-known landscape is the same, only the figures in the foreground have changed. When one travelled through Palestine during the years of the British Mandate, one's attention was continuously attracted by the shrill, triangular Arab-Jewish-British conflict. Today, the dust of that battle is gone, and so are most of the Arabs and all the British. What remains is the state of Israel, which covers the greater part of Palestine, and the contrast between the new utilitarian colonisation and the brooding landscape against which it is set.

In Tel Aviv and Haifa, or where the traffic moves continuously through citrus country on the coastal road between these two cities, life in Israel has already a remarkably settled look. (And yet, for quite a stretch the frontier runs practically alongside this road: at one point in the coastal plain of Sharon, where Israel is at its narrowest, it approaches to within ten miles of the sea—not much room here for "defence in depth.") Beyond this frontier, as far as the average Israeli is concerned, lies the whole unknown Middle East of the Arabs. It is an unquiet frontier, from which the sound of shooting is seldom absent. Arabs infiltrate, Israelis retaliate, the larger incidents make the international press headlines, and in the councils of the United Nations heads are solemnly shaken. Yet these Israeli-Arab armed clashes, which are always in the news, involve only the civilian inhabitants of the frontier settlements, who are probably not more than 2 per cent of the population. Indeed, behind the thin khaki line of their young soldiers on the frontier the Israelis have been proceeding undeterred to meet the challenge set by the proclamation of the state.

You can see most of the aspects of this challenge in Beersheba. The Negev is the half-fertile, half-desert southern triangle of Israel that is only now being developed, and Beersheba is its natural capital. Before 1948, it had been little more than a dusty, overgrown Arab village, a centre for local Bedouins, its regular inhabitants numbering about 1200 Arabs and a handful of bored British police. Today, the Israeli Government is working to turn Beersheba into a busy industrial and communications centre of some 40,000 prospective inhabitants, and about 20,000 people are already there, mostly new Oriental-Jewish immigrants. One is driven round neat planning zones, new housing estates of simple apartment blocks or identical small houses, shopping arcades and restaurants, and yet more building plots. Laundry flutters from balconies, and the whole scene has a slightly suburban look: was it necessary to create this new conurbation on this ancient site? Yet on closer view, one sees the other side. Not less than 180,000 trees have been planted in and around New Beersheba, and presently they must effect their transformation. You see the new theatre, as a building still starkly isolated, but already paying its way as combined cinema, concert hall, and theatre. You can go into Beersheba's large new central

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bookshop, impressive by any standards, with its multi-lingual range of modern books. My own eye was caught by copies of the air edition of the *New York Times* three days old, and of the previous week's *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, *Economist*, and *New Statesman*.

The image of a young Jew from Baghdad, who had known more comfortable days, sitting now in a hot, bare, concrete one-room flat in New Beersheba and reading the latest financial article in the *Economist*, or Critic in the *New Statesman*—it shows a clinging to culture which has something heroic about it. As much as all the new buildings, or the sight of rich Negev fields where a year ago there was scrub, such sidelights seem to reveal how much Israel is still a Purposive Society.

EXPERIENCE shows that even the most static societies can for brief spells become purposive. These are moments of an overriding sense of common purpose, when almost every citizen feels passionately involved in the achievements of his society, even if he has no direct part in them. Revolution can produce such moments: for some time after 1917, Soviet Russia was probably such a Purposive Society, and so, twenty years later, was Republican Spain. War, or its threat, can equally ignite such emotion. The Britain of 1940–41, of Dunkirk and the Blitz, was for a while spurred by such an unspoken sense of dedication, so that radio listeners in the four-ale bars could thrill to the brave tones of Churchill without needing to understand each word. Such moments are of necessity short-lived. It is a perversion of totalitarian rulers that they try to enforce purposiveness by terror.

Within the small confines of Palestine, the purposiveness of Jewish society has been kept going to a remarkable degree by outside pressure. Of its own, this faith might have faded, but the succession of Jewish disasters in Europe did more than enough to keep Zionist purpose alive. Today, it is still there, but in a quieter vein. For, since 1948, something else has happened to Israel—a process of normalisation, in the sense that Israel is now a small state and so in many ways like other small states, with its own, growing state bureaucracy.

The process has been speeded by the character and rate of the recent mass immigration into the country. It is often told, as an impressive fact, that one present-day Australian in ten is a new Australian, arrived since 1945. In Israel, one in every two citizens has come since 1948. About half of the three-quarter million newcomers were European Jews. Some had survived in Hitler's camps by courage, by their wits, by luck, by money. The others had decided to leave the "People's Democracies" while exit was still possible. "Not the best colonisation material," old Palestinians will tell a visitor, for years of fear, uncertainty, and persecution, though they did bring out qualities of exceptional fortitude in some of the survivors, in many cases resulted in demoralisation. The other half of the newcomers were Oriental or North African Jews who naturally brought with them Oriental notions of life, the only ones they knew. The hoped-for immigration of middle-class Jews from Western Europe or America did not come about. The Israeli nation of tomorrow will have more of a Mediterranean complexion than was anticipated.

In many parts of Israel a touch of the Levant has crept into the picture. You see it in the very centre of the New Jerusalem where an Oriental looking crowd mills past untidy little shops. True, the scene also includes bookshop windows where you see the names of André Gide, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, or Dylan Thomas side by side with new books in Hebrew; but still, the touch of the Levant is there. Over half of Israel's children under fifteen are today of Oriental or North African origin.

The Israeli leadership has improvised with immense resource and energy in hammering this mass into a new citizenry of Israel. Sometimes it overreached itself, as when the new education law announced that the state would provide, not only free elementary schooling for every child, but free kindergartens as well. The public money for the kindergartens was never there, and parents must now pay fees. But there is no mistaking the dynamic behind the new building one sees on every side. Tel Aviv with its surrounding suburban areas has today grown to an extraordinary city of nearly

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500,000 people. It still looks like an enlarged small town—hot, glaring brick-and-plaster white, unbeautiful, immensely crowded. You have an impression of vital human energy, but also of a city into whose cubical buildings far too many human beings have been poured, so that you imagine half the inhabitants as anonymous boarders with only bundles or suitcases and a bed. People in their thousands are on the pavements, in cafés, shirt-sleeved on balconies, or seen through wide-open windows listening to loud radios, and you conclude—wrongly as it happens—that here is a city with no mystery left.

Israel's countryside has also acquired a new look. Hundreds of cooperative smallholders' villages, with white, box-like little houses, have been set up. Though severely utilitarian and standardised, the villages have been given commemorative Hebrew names; often motor roads lead to them, signposted in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. From outside, the villages look neat enough, but as I walked through some of them I could see that the going had been pretty rough. The new immigrants had been put down here with little of the arduous and elaborate training young groups of settlers in the *kibbutzim*, the collective villages, used to receive. Around the houses one can see old belongings still untidily stacked, townsmen turned farmers walking in a new, dull silence, while the women tend to look harassed.

The typical new Jewish immigrant of today has little interest in ideologies, and is hardly a Zionist in the old sense. What he wants at the end of a day's work is to be able to shut his own front door and forget all about his work until the next morning. Only the children are quite at home to an extent which is fascinating to watch. One village held North African Jews; in the next they were all from Romania; in the third, Orthodox Jews from Yemen—yet the children in all three already had the common Israeli look of self-reliance and physical charm. The fierce sun, the Mediterranean soil, the outdoor life, the absence of old Jewish anxieties, were already working their mysterious alchemy, as memories of North African bazaars or Rumanian camps faded to nothing.

One soon hears in conversation that socialism in Israel has fallen into crisis. It is a crisis of "where do we go from here?"—just as in Britain. The Histadrut, the Israel Labour Federation, has today a membership of over 600,000 and still provides the backbone of the Welfare State. But the leaders have for some time been stumping the country stressing, not higher wages, but higher productivity, if Israel is to survive economically. The Left in Israel would still be strong enough to impose a far greater degree of socialism if its leaders thought this practical policy—which they do not.

Behind the egalitarian look of the crowds in the streets of Tel Aviv one can also notice an emergence of class distinctions. True, there is little hunger or acute suffering, not much more than one would find in a far richer Western country. Set against the surrounding Middle East, Israel's public health and housing and education and social welfare services are something of a miracle. The Tel Aviv Workers Sick Fund Hospital is still the largest building in the land. The *kibbutzim*, the collective villages, still attract some of the élite among the youth of Israel. Yet there is much living at subsistence level, and especially from the new Oriental immigrants one can see something like a permanent proletariat beginning to form. The new upper class is more difficult to distinguish. But late one night I stood on Tel Aviv's sea-front, not far from the popular restaurants where in the daytime soldiers and passers-by like to listen to blaring radio music. Now it was dark and the raucous noise had vanished. The night air was warm, and the moonlight lent unwonted softness to the city. On the beach the sea was stirring, as if to emphasise its presence, neglected in the daylight. And along the curving promenade one large American car after the other appeared, sweeping the scene briefly with its headlights and then passing. Where to, and coming from where? Who were the busy occupants?

Some are very unhappy about the new trends. There was, for instance, an old friend who is a writer and historian of trade unionism, and who in his day between the world wars had known half the socialist leaders of Europe. We met one evening in one of the more

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popular cafés of Tel Aviv which, seen through his eyes, seemed to take on a touch of a greyish Waste Land. What did I think of the new spirit in Israel, he asked? And almost at once, like an answer, there came a commotion. A number of lorries drew up noisily at the kerb and young Israeli officers jumped out. Some wore what seemed British khaki, some Royal Air Force blue—one had to look closely at the insignia to note the differences—and a few even had handlebar moustaches. The resemblance to wartime British officers seemed unforced *pastiche*. (Israel, in general, appears to be the last spot where the romance of the Eighth Army and the wartime Royal Air Force still survives.) The young men had obviously come from duty and were even more obviously celebrating. They had some girls with them, they began to drink and to sing, but only in snatches of song, and some of those in English. They looked aggressively gay and carefree, part of the new youth of Israel, manifestly unpolitical and healthily uninterested in those passionate debates of Right versus Left Socialism which had split whole *kibbutzim*. Even Belsen and Auschwitz would be only names to them. They were young, and mourning nobody.

Yet my friend, who had once known Léon Blum and Arthur Henderson, regarded these young officers sadly. Most of the old socialist leaders in Israel were gone, he said, and had left no real successors. And what had he to tell this new Israeli youth?

WHEN the first Socialist-Zionist pioneers came to Palestine, they could still dream of building a Jewish Socialist Commonwealth in the Middle East, which would teach the Arabs the arts of industrial living, and serve as a bridge between East and West. The nationalist movements of the smaller European nations, and Zionism was one such movement, still had the romantic and optimistic outlook of the days before 1914–18. Today these hopes have been superseded (and not only in Israel), yet the state of Israel is very much there. Hence in this harsher climate of the nineteen-fifties one can find many thoughtful people in Israel concerned, less with economics or international politics, and more with the question-mark of Israel's cultural future.

Orthodox Jewish religious observance has played little part in the making of Israel. Attempts have been made to breathe new life into Biblical festivals by means of procession, song, and dance, the usual children in white, the fruits of the field. They are ingenious, but new traditions cannot be set up quite so easily. The Palestine landscape in the background is too old and too harsh for this. All the more important, therefore, is the general culture the earlier immigrants brought from Europe, that is, the intense cultivation of literacy, education, the arts and letters. But the struggle to maintain this culture began with its transplantation.

One would have to go far to find any cultural life as colourful, hectic, and concentrated as that going on behind the unpromising façade of Tel Aviv—and *this* is Tel Aviv's secret which is only gradually revealed to the visitor. For here, it seems, the pace has not slowed at all. For example, last year not less than eighteen to twenty new Hebrew books—mostly translations—appeared in this country of 1·6 million people (of whom many cannot read Hebrew) each *week*. One publisher to whom I talked showed me his 1954 list on which were translations of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*, Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*, Tolstoy's *Childhood and Youth*, and so on. One popular Israeli poet has sold in editions of 20–30,000 and *Cry the Beloved Country*, in Hebrew, in an edition of 40,000.

Israel also supports three regular, and some occasional, theatre repertory companies. So great is the hunger for drama that it is not infrequent for every seat in every theatre to be sold out weeks in advance. And the fare is formidably intellectual. The youngest of the repertories, the Chamber theatre, recently played Shaw's *St. Joan* for 120 performances in Tel Aviv alone. One would expect a Jewish city to have an intense musical life: in fact, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, with only a small hall, has to repeat its symphony concerts up to ten times to satisfy all its 11,000 Tel Aviv subscribers.

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To see all this cultural life, Parisian in intensity if not in accomplishment, and achieved in a hot, ugly, overcrowded, traditionless immigrant city conjured up on yesterday's sand-dunes such as Tel Aviv—to see all this happening is enormously impressive. And yet, from Israelis who ought to know, one hears pessimistic reports that these high standards cannot be maintained. After all, contrary to usual experience, in Israel it was the intellectual élite which immigrated first, bringing its concentrated essence of European culture, while "the masses" only arrived later, bringing their culture, or the lack of it. A marked new trend towards "popular culture" can already be noticed in Israel. A new Hebrew sensational press has appeared. So has a whole swarm of Hebrew imitations of American movie or women's magazines. The young seem to read them eagerly.

In general, a striking development in Israel today is the attraction of the youth towards an American type of popular culture which has swept into the country. For example, under the State Department's "Information Media Guarantee" scheme, American books are sold in Israeli bookshops at a rate of literally millions a year. Many of them have been highly commendable, others are paper backs in the usual lurid covers. American dance music has made its impact, and so have American films. It is said that Israel's cinema attendance is among the highest in the world.

Thus one can see a fairly clear cultural conflict in Israel today: on the one side, the spirit of the Zionist purposive society, and on the other side, the popular mass culture of today. Certain veteran Zionists are apt to deplore the new outlook in Israel and to blame something they call "American influence," but I think this question of Israel's culture is more complex than that, and part of a much larger question. After all, today we can see a fairly clear-cut cultural split throughout the West. On the one side (both in Europe and America) we have today's version of the older European upper-class culture, based on university life, the buying of serious books, interest in serious music and drama, and even in modern art and poetry. On the other side we have present-day popular culture, based on popular newspapers and magazines with mass circulation, on the mass appeal of films, radio, and television, and all increasingly commercialised, and with American influences dominant. The undecided question is to what degree the older, staid, minority culture can hold out against the appeal of popular culture. And this is the conflict which one can see mirrored in Israel more sharply than anywhere else—because the country is so small, because all cultural debate is so intense, and because the two trends are so visibly represented by two generations of Israelis.

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D. J. Enright

Happy New Year

AN avalanche of cards, a thousand calligraphic miles,
assure a bright New Year.
And yet and yet, I met a banker weeping through his smiles,
upon that hectic morn.

Omedetō, he told me, while the saké bubbled on his lips.
His frock-coat trembled in its new and yearly bliss.
"A hard year for Japan," he said, and gurgled out a sigh.
"A hard grim year." A saké-smelling tear suffused his
reddened eye.

He clapped me by the hand, he led me to his bright new
house.
He showed his ancient incense burners, precious treasures,
cold and void.
His family too he showed, drawn up in columns, and his
fluttering spouse.
We bowed and wept together over the grim new year.

I walked away, my head was full of yen,
of falling yen.
I saw the others with their empty pockets,
Merry on the old year's dregs, their mouths distilled
a warm amen!

The poor are always with us. Only they
can find a value in the new.
They are the masters of their fourpenny kites
That soar in the open market of the sky.
Whatever wrongs await, they still preserve some rites.

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Cyril Connolly

One of My Londons

"So then, Oxford Street, Stony-hearted mother. . . ."

ONCE or twice a month, like an old trapper clinging to his pelt-less round, I revisit London to correct a proof, drink oysters with a publisher, prospect an auction-room or favourite book-shop. I stay, if at all, but one night for I am usually depressed by the stale air and listless shuffle of the street, the monumental tawdriness of lettering and lighting, the quicksand of vague faces—and nothing, I find, comes up to the moment of arrival, the taxis of Charing Cross, the stucco of King William Street or glitter of Saint Martin's—unless it be the lamplit curve of the river when the train trundles homeward over the bridge.

One blue summer twilight, however, I was passing by a mews flat in Knightsbridge where two window-boxes were in flower above a painted portico. A tall well-dressed young man with a baby in his arms stands on the darkening step; the door is opened by a laughing girl in nothing but a bath-towel, silhouetted against the light in the hall-way. In that moment I have unwillingly lived myself into this couple; I was there when they first met at a cocktail party; I know that weak, long-handed young man, his cruel charm and mannered voice and his incurable unrest: I see this naked girl bubbling with hope in her pale summer frock, keen on the arts, angry with mother, stabbed suddenly by desire and maternal anguish as she accepts her first whisky from him. And I am aware that the Past has yanked me back, that they are one with innumerable couples I have known, with all the trapped young *couche-tard* fathers and honey-headed girls determined, as they pile into the little car at week-ends, to make the best of things, while the drink bills and the garage bills and the tailor's bills pile up after them until that terrible quarrel at the night club, when first she wipes her lipstick from another's mouth and his wallet bulges with treason. . . . And another day, while crossing Bedford Square, I am doubled up with nameless and immediate anguish, blackened with fear—and forced to run for sanctuary to some old dusty counter and efface myself among Victorian prints, the collected works of Lamartine or the unsaleable *Picciola*. And then I remember Petronius: "An old love pinches like a crab." It is my discarded mistress who has nipped me, the great city reminding one that no indifference, however ingrowing, is proof against a casual jab from her nondescript sting-ray buildings:

> "*Tout l'affreux passé saute, piaule, miaule, glapit*
> *Dans le brouillard sale et jaune et rose des Sohos*
> *Avec des 'all rights,' et des 'indeeds,' et des 'hos! hos!' . . .*"

LONDON is the capital of prose, as Paris of art or New York of modern living, and most of this good prose is concerned with dandies or with slums or with fog: sometimes

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the dandy goes slumming and sometimes, taking advantage of the fog, the slum-folk sneak up on the dandy. The London I like best is the one I can find in books where it lies embalmed between 1760 and 1840, the dandies still outnumbering the slums and the fog as yet barely invented.

This London takes shape with Rochester and Etherege; in Congreve, Pope, and the "Journal to Stella," she comes into her own with Boswell; Boswell and Casanova who both set out to conquer the city in 1762 and who themselves are conquered by love, if love be the proper term for Louisa and La Charpillon. And now comes the golden age of the dandies, the London of Chesterfield and Horace Walpole, of Selwyn and March, of Fox and Sheridan, of Alvanley and Brummell, of White's and Brook's and Almack's, Devonshire House and Albany. Brummell fled to Calais in 1816, a few hours after his appearance at the opera—when his famous note: "My dear Scrope, Lend me five hundred pounds for a few days; the funds are shut for the dividends or I would not have made this request. G. Brummell" had received its infamous reply: "My dear Brummell, All my money is locked up in the funds. Scrope Davies." The Beau's life was written by Captain Jesse who met him in his old age at Caen and who also edited the Selwyn correspondence; four volumes of absorbing small-talk from the later 18th century. As a cure for anxiety and worry and for that nameless sickness of the inner eye which views the contemporary world in monochrome, I would suggest a prolonged immersion in these irresponsible letter writers, in the strong, calm flow of London's 18th century whose eddies broaden into the Regency, with Harriet Wilson, Greville, and Captain Gronow to complete it and some of Mr. W. S. Lewis' admirable documentation, such as his *Three Tours Through London* to fill in local colour.

The dandy's world is friendly, formal, and heartless, occluding the imagination, and if the cure in that direction should not go deep enough, I would propose a visit to the more spiritual London of the Romantics, to Hampstead and Highgate and Islington in the days of Keats, Coleridge, and Lamb—or a compromise may be sought in the drawing room of Holland House of which we possess such complete descriptions by Greville, Macaulay, and Talfourd.

"It is scarcely seven—and you are seated in an oblong room, rich in old gilding, opposite a deep recess, pierced by large old windows through which the rich branches of trees, bathed in golden light, just admit the faint outline of the Surrey Hills. Among the guests are some perhaps of the highest rank, always some of high political importance, about whom the interest of busy life gathers, intermixed with others eminent already in literature or art, or of that dawning promise which the host delights to discover and the hostess to smile on. All are assembled for the purpose of enjoyment, the anxieties of the minister, the feverish struggles of the partisan, the silent toils of the artist or critic, are finished for the week; professional and literary jealousies are hushed; sickness, decrepitude and death are silently voted shadows. . . . Every appliance of physical luxury which the most delicate art can supply, attends on each; every faint wish which luxury creates is anticipated. . . . As the dinner merges into the dessert, and the sunset casts a richer glow on the branches, still, or lightly waving in the evening light, and on the scene within, the harmony of all sensations becomes more perfect; the choicest wines are enhanced in their liberal but temperate use by the vista opened in Lord Holland's tales of bacchanalian evenings at Brook's, with Fox and Sheridan, when potations deeper and more serious rewarded the Statesman's toils, and shortened his days, until at length the serener pleasure of conversation, of the now carelessly scattered groups, is enjoyed in that old, long unrivalled library in which Addison drank and mused and wrote; where every living grace attends; 'And more than echoes talk along the walls.'"

IT WAS nourished on such fairy tales, (though with appetites more approaching those of Boswell and Casanova) that I came to live in London at the age of twenty-three. I had been taken on as secretary by Logan Pearsall Smith who had the idea of trying to endow a

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form of literary scholarship for a young writer by giving him a few pounds a week to live on while preparing a masterpiece and while assisting his employer by gleaning for the various anthologies which punctuated his leisure. I still carried some old debts from Oxford and my salary was soon pledged far ahead. I had also a weakness for taking my friends out to dinner at the Ivy, which has hardly changed at all in a quarter of a century; at the Berkeley which has changed considerably; at Boulestin's which was then a small pink paradise in Leicester Square, or at the Tour Eiffel (the most expensive) which has quite disappeared, all turtles turned. Desmond MacCarthy gave me the novels to review for the *New Statesman* and I went to live with an Oxford friend who had gone into journalism. We rented an Edwardian cottage studio in Yeoman's Row, Knightsbridge, full of high-backed Italianate furniture and cardboard Spanish ironwork.

Drowsy hour or so in the empty house, sit in my future arm-chair and read idly while somebody strums on a piano and the slum children play outside; a heavy sullen evening of imminent rain. Enjoy the children's voices and the sad thudding of their ball against the high windows. Explore the house and love it. Fondness for the strange furniture and garden outlook. Queer intimacy of possession in the empty house, a feeling of "Childe Roland" and that I would write well here. Take a taxi to the Board of Trade and wait about in the rain for an hour and a half in the hope of seeing A. No sign of her and with a curious sense of dream-like fatality I plunge southward into Lambeth through a green and streaming urban sunset. At last I come to Charnwood Street lapped in obscurity and glaucous twilight with girls who laugh at me from upper windows. There is no answer to the bell and only a baby's crying greets me as I stand by the milk bottle outside the door. . . .

OCTOBER 3RD, 1927.—*Long quiet evening alone. Digestion very bad, dining off tea. Read Maurice Baring's letters from his Russian friend. He writes: "Any person taking a special interest in me is a frightful burden from which I flee in terror. I had always a disgust for men who want a woman to wash their soul's dirty linen for them and tell them the soul itself is pure. Marivaudage—Looking in woman for something she hasn't got and which you haven't got, begging where you should be giving, which leads to unceasing hesitation, and not knowing which is, after all, the right one. If you want inspiration from a woman, you must change her as you change your buttonhole; if you want to make her satisfied and be satisfied with that, marry her and turn philister. But be clear about what you want."*

More unpleasant than filing one's bills is the effort of facing all the people I have thought I was in love with, permanently, since the summer. N. whom I hate, P. who is a bore, S. whose shares go neither up nor down, A. whom I have forgotten altogether, L. who is only eleven, and now R., but six years older, unawakened, stolid, last of the line of fair-haired, competent Dorian maidens about whom I feel so passionate and poetic.

OCTOBER 7TH.—*R.'s mother came to tea on Thursday: Delicious, exquisite, and alarming. She said that she didn't believe that children really began to live till their parents were dead, that she had had a happy childhood because her mother and father were happily married, that all her sisters and she had made happy marriages, and that she was sure happiness in childhood was based entirely on that; she talked of the unhappiness of youth and how unnecessary it seemed, her daughters were not as happy as she. She spoke of the importance of money to marriage and as she was leaving said: "We must find you a rich wife!"*

Philoctetes' farewell to his island is the most Elizabethan thing in Greek. The more I review novels, the more I read the classics, the only literature that is complete, that satisfies every need, and provides a decent privacy where one can understand oneself and be alone. I suppose I have had as much enjoyment from Tibullus this year as from any other author.

OCTOBER 10TH, 1927.—*I get happier and happier, autumn intoxicates me, so does London, so does Yeoman's Row and the slum children and the evenings spent* à l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur. *It becomes harder and harder to read or write. Dinner with the Berensons in Lady Horner's house, which is full of books and pre-Raphaelite portraits, all somehow a little wrong. B. B. looked more pained and beautiful than I have ever seen him, but very old, Isaiah as a French Academician.*

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His temper was bad at the beginning of the meal (soup, fish, partridge, ices, champagne, and port). He said life consisted of a double rebellion, tragic and comic, the one a revolt against death and oblivion from which sprang all works of art and love, the other a revolt against the law of averages which made people try to be different from others and discover new forms of old age or marriage or writing. He said "Bloomsbury" had not got beyond the comic rebellion, Roger Fry had adopted his own early principles and never got beyond them, Eliot was a thin and squeaking Matthew Arnold and "Bloomsbury" a kind of dandyism only compatible with youth. He said Europe was not decadent, neither was England, the only decadence was that of the Roman world from the first to the fifth centuries A.D., *and that decadence could never occur as an isolated intellectual phenomenon as it was primarily physiological and therefore, since physiologically even England was unchanged, there could be no true decadence.*

In art also, he went on, people were still looking for new forms, while decadence consisted in doing bad work in old ones. America wasn't decadent either, the real danger to England was not Americanism, but civil servants, Tchinovnik—the spirit which had ruined Russia, the spirit of Keynes in the Nation.

Mrs. Berenson said Oscar Wilde was the only person of his time whose eyes did not travel on to look for someone more important when he spoke to you. She met him once five times in a week and the last time he said, "I can't possibly sit next to you, you have heard all my conversations for this week and I have nothing more prepared. Is there anyone of them you would like to hear again?" "Yes, the one about Evolution," said Mrs. Berenson, and he went through it but so perfectly that it all seemed to arise from her own replies. B. B. said one could review books for a limit of two years without becoming a hack. I complained of my material happiness, that I enjoyed life so much at present that I had no ideas at all beyond a vague meditation about physical things. He told me not to mind. "Ideas will come," he said, "but youth will go."

WEDNESDAY.—*Bob Boothby, his mother, and Nina Seafield to luncheon. I like her and she asked me to a cocktail party. Boothby asks me to dinner. Write an offensive letter to R. which may do some good and go round to Nina's. She has red hair, blue eyes, and attractive stubby figure, a lovely stammer and gasping kind of speech. Bob there, who offers me a job, exciting. Back and dine out with Patrick at his club. Ring up R. to hear her voice and write to her again. Mrs. Fitz's, and a lovely girl called Lola; French, very young and attractive. Back, still desperately in love with R., to a late bed.*

THURSDAY.—*Dinner with Bob Boothby and Gladwyn Jebb at the House of Commons, excellent dinner, liked them both. We hear the new Prayer Book thrown out, most exciting. Walked back with Gladwyn, it was agreed that henceforth I should be a cad and a careerist.*

Thought of R. glows like an electric toaster.

FRIDAY.—*Lovely letter from R., hope springs again. Walked round to Elm Park Gardens but the house was dark. Hours and hours of watching but never a light. Thought of Swann and Odette and felt like my own ghost.*

Κἀγὼ γαρ προθύροις νίσσομαι ὐόμενος.

SATURDAY.—*Failed to ride with Nina owing to the snow. Lunch with Logan and we go afterwards to Battersea Park. See a good 18th century church with tomb of Bolingbroke. Logan said Holland House must have been terribly dull. He had met in his youth one of the old survivors of that world where the conversation used to consist of long monologues which displayed your general knowledge and reading (in the case of the survivor, Aberdare, his topic was the route of Alexander's Indian expedition) while all the other old gentlemen sat around like croquet-players, waiting to cut in at the first cough.*

He said there were three illusions everybody passed through: falling in love, starting a magazine, and thinking they could make money out of keeping chickens. Back and wait ages for R., go in and out into the snow again and change and re-change my tie. At last she comes and we discuss our situation, not arriving at any settlement beyond the general relief of being able to discuss it. R. very lovely and boyish, wearing a yellow skirt that matched my cushions; brown-faced, green-eyed, tender and jovial. Her sister came to fetch her and we all went to Westminster in the tube and walked to South Kensington through the snow. Feel infinitely happier after seeing her. On to Nina's for dinner. N. very attractive and Gilberte-like. On after to the Café Anglais, drink R.'s health several times, back late and write to her in the small hours.

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20TH.—*Wrote my article in the morning. Very cold day. Lunch at the Traveller's with Gladwyn. Send off article. Go on to tea with Hilda Trevelyan. George Moore comes, impressive and fussy. He said no good literature had ever come out of a salon. Logan said, "What about Proust?" George Moore (triumphantly) "Who wrote that?"*

Home to dress, then dine with Leigh at the Ivy. He is charming, and afterwards I go to North Street to fetch Nina. Thrill in the drawing room, the candles, the log fire, the dull light on my top hat, the taxi waiting outside in the snow, then Nina's footfall on the stair and delicious roucoulement of greeting. On to Lady Cunard's, carol-singers drear, dance with Nina and talk to Patrick and Brian Guinness. Snobbish thrill at sight of the Prince of Wales walking alone up the wide staircase and shaking hands at the top with Maurice Baring and Diana Duff-Cooper. Enjoy the rich patina of the evening, the lovely women and vacant faces of the extroverts, the expression of envy on Clarence Marjoribanks' face as he asked me to introduce him to Nina, and the fatuous air of luxurious abandon on Lady Cunard's as she danced with the Prince. We sat next to him at supper.

The storm brewed over the week-end and the main fact out of a mass of complication and rumour is that R. and I are at all costs not to meet or write again.

* * * *

MARCH, 1928.—*General sense of depression and discontent, with usual horror of literature and hopeless uncertainty over R.*

. . . "clene out of your minde
Ye han me cast, and I ne can nor may
For al this world, with-in myn herte finde
T'unloven you a quarter of a day" . . .

The soif for life has greatly intensified so that to dine out every evening is not enough and has to be contrasted in a sequel among the centres of vitality; nearly every day I street-prowl. Cultivated people are shrimps in a rock-pool from whom I can learn nothing.

ROTHERHITHE.—*Good docks and bridges but very little life, a few pubs, some wooden houses, continuous smell of lice which makes one feel abroad.*

LIMEHOUSE.—*Gambling dens suppressed. Met a Chinaman in Pennyfields who offered to show me round, he was reading a book on psychology. Touching to see the English waitress writing out Chinese ideograms on bits of paper and learning fresh ones from the proprietor. When she got one right, she smiled foolishly and threw it on the fire.*

SHADWELL.—*Love Lane disappointing. Ratcliffe Highway, where there were a thousand brothels in 1890, is no more. Good market in Watney Street, best in evenings. Embankment lovely.*

WAPPING.—*Good high street, wharves and water stairs. Here I saw that strange, nocturnal goatish clergyman stoop around an alley, blinking at the unaccustomed light from the bonfires (Guy Fawkes Day) that crimsoned his long white beard.*

WHITECHAPEL.—*Much the best part of East End, especially side streets off Commercial Road (markets) and Leman Street, Wentworth, Old Montague streets, on the Stepney side. Here is Latin gaiety, crowds and music and colour, rows of cars standing outside obscure cafés, and an excellent band and a tiny dance-hall. The Jewesses are amazingly attractive, a mass bloom seems to emanate from them in large quantities and they appear to walk up and down the street all night. Men dingy and undersized. Even when English themselves, these girls all deeply dislike the English, and the foreigners' good manners and capacity for passion are everywhere well-spoken of.*

SOHO.—*New Compton Street. Café opposite Greek restaurant entirely full of Negroes. Very crowded, good grenadine.*

WARDOUR STREET.—*Chinese restaurant with marvellous waitress, seventeen, father West Indian, mother German, name Lydia.*

HOPKINS STREET.—*Café apparently always full of crooks, sinister, open all night.*

Desperate anxiety to get abroad, away from R.'s world; deepening passion for low life. Live in Green Dragon Court, Hop market, Southwark.

LILY: *"Oh! I do like Piccadilly, don't you? I could never stay away from it long. Once I went to live with a man, a nice man he was, too, he had a flat in Earl's Court and I stayed down there three months. Well one day he sent me up West to get some things and I got to Piccadilly about six o'clock. When I saw the lights and everything I was happier than I'd ever been. 'I am not going to lose this again,' I said, and so I never went back. I left all my clothes down there, and everything else, too.*

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I don't know what he must have thought. Well, I got a fiver that night and I walked into Maxim's with it and when the waiter came up I ordered two bottles of champagne. Well, when I'd drunk them I noticed a woman with a red dress on, sitting with a man opposite me, so I said, 'You ought to give me that red dress, it would suit me much better.' I suppose I was a bit tight but I just said it to make conversation and she flew into a tearing rage. 'Take this woman out, she is drunk,' she said to the manager. 'I'll show you whether I'm drunk,' I said, 'I've paid for this and I've a right to have it,' and I hit him on the head with a champagne bottle. Oh! there was an awful row. The band stopped and all the dancing and a detective came and threw me out and they said I'd be arrested if I ever put my head in there again. But I don't mind, I never cared for Chinamen. Well, goodbye; they say the first man you meet after midnight on Hallowe'en means something to you—not that you're quite the first."

* * * *

PALETTE. FOR 1927. AUTUMN.—*Brown and gold—brown curtains and chairs of Yeoman's Row, gold tiles in the fire, the green leaves through the lattice windows, then yellow leaves, then black stems of trees. The lights of Brompton Road, the news-boys outside the tube station as I come back from* The New Statesman *to the gramophone, the warm light, the evening paper and a late tea. Drinking with Patrick on idle Sunday mornings, going to the Film Society, dinners alone at the Ivy, theatres alone in the yellow fog. When I say suddenly, "autumn," I first see nothing but brown and gold, then I see three pictures rolled into one, the brown fur rug on my sofa, the two gold cushions, R.'s brown dress against them, her golden face and hair, a glimpse of the trees through the drawn curtains, a wild excitement in the air—still brown and gold the picture changes, a cold wet afternoon by Battersea bridge, R., slim, golden, slant-eyed, in boy's felt hat and brown jumper, looking down the road and tapping with one foot on the kerb—the swirl of the grey autumnal river, the wet embankment, the waiting figure against the trees of the park, her marsh-green eyes and yellow hair. Windy twilight in the Fulham Road, the roar of buses, the November dusk, walking away from Elm Park Gardens in the eddy of fast-falling leaves from plane and elm crushed close on the rain-swept pavement: swirl of the Debussy quartet matching the wide curve of the road and the depression in my heart: walking on this windy evening, the lamps just lit and wet with rain, alone along the broad street, brown street with lights of gold.*

* * * *

Except for poverty, incompatibility, opposition of parents, absence of love on one side and of desire to marry on both, nothing would appear to stand in the way of our union.

* * * *

EVEN after twenty-five years I cannot read the jottings of this vanished youth who bears my name without discomfort. Insecurity and the only-child's imagined need for love have stamped him, and I remember every detail of his unhappy courtship; the two lovely sisters who captivated the two newly installed young bachelors, the marvellous promise of that autumn, the mischief-making false friend, the apprehensive mother and the furious father who so easily separated us.

And this mined area round the Brompton Road is but one of my Londons, even as Chelsea and Bloomsbury and Regent's Park have other danger zones and trip wires. When the last war broke out, I happened to rent the same studio in Yeoman's Row and to sleep in the room where twelve years before I had experienced so many emotions, such maiming of heart and pride, where I had discovered London and the blessing of mixed society and had fallen in love and been frustrated—but never was the Past recalled to mind—for it is too subtle to operate in such a fashion, and we may haunt the scene of our triumph or disappointment with perfect impunity until—in one split second—the sky darkens; the figure in the bath-towel who could have been R. opens the door to the young man that might have been me; there is a moment of recollection, and the Past strikes; the long-buried voice or gesture loom, adumbrating relentlessly the pangs of human loss—apprehension of beauty and awareness of loss—which constitute the sour-sweet juice of Time: "Darkness and lights: tempest and human faces," as De

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Quincey dreamt, "and at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms—and clasped hands and heart-breaking partings and then—everlasting farewells, and again and yet again reverberated—everlasting farewells."

The best attitude to such London apparitions used to be a visit to the Sherlock Holmes Museum, which has been gone, for too long a time, to America. The reproduction of Holmes' study with his unfinished breakfast waiting, the invisible gramophone playing street music, with the sound of a hansom cab arriving, of a newsboy crying the victory at Omdurman, dismantle our personal time-bomb and carry us back into a male society which protected us even before we were born. If such a mystical experience be not available, then let us visit some splendid tradesman of the old school; a tailor, a wine merchant, a boot-maker, a vendor of fine silver, of old china, fishing rods or saddles. If we owe them all money, it won't work, and we must try a good barber. I know of one who used to shave the Aga Khan in his bed without waking him. But best of all is the interior of a club, with a copy of *Country Life*, an arm-chair and some anchovy toast, for clubs were designed expressly to keep the demon at bay, and here again we are back with the dandies whose leathery faces sneer down at us from their engravings. But even clubs have their perils, such as electric fires and waitresses; some careless old members have a habit of dying in them and one can be stricken down in a sullen moment while contemplating the accumulated selfishness of so many elderly lonely people. London is dangerous; it is a place for the strong and methodical, for the brute and the bank manager; but for the sensitive who are allergic to social sheen and waste, to apathy and ugliness, who have lived so long and behaved so badly, who used to think once of all the fabulous houses that we might be lucky enough to enter and now, with Samuel Rogers (last ornament of Holland House) "find a walk through the London streets like a walk in a cemetery"—for us, there is nothing to beat the 7:15 from Charing Cross, the thundering girders of the bridge and the funeral bake-meats on the diner.

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Raymond Aron

Nations and Ideologies

WE are becoming ever more aware that the political categories of the last century—Left and Right, liberal and socialist, traditionalist and revolutionary—have lost their relevance. They imply the existence of conflicts which experience has since reconciled, and they lump together ideas and men whom the course of history has drawn into opposing camps. How can one describe as "extreme Left" the Soviet régime which identifies society with the state? Is it possible to see it as a continuation of the struggle against arbitrary rule, or as favouring individual freedom and the control of government by the governed? Or again, when a parliament of "Pashas" is dissolved by a group of army officers sincerely concerned for national independence and economic progress, who then establish a military dictatorship, what is the correct word to describe their régime? Is it accurate to describe as "liberal" Dr. Erhard's policy in Western Germany, or as "socialist" the policy of Mr. Gaitskell under the late Labour Government? And from which doctrine should the present practice of Mr. Butler be derived?

I do not believe it is impossible to bring order into this ideological chaos, but it is essential first to recognise how controversies change their significance from one country to another. The same words are used, but the realities to which they refer are different.

1. *The Debate in Britain*

TWO facts dominate the British situation: first, the prevailing democratic institutions are unchallenged, and second, socialism (which in Britain has never been doctrinaire or Marxist) represents the present rather than the future, is a fact rather than a programme.

Party conflicts and intellectual differences neither are, nor even appear to be, of truly vital concern to any section of the community. Whatever view the nation may finally adopt, no one will have to sacrifice any value he deems essential. Agreement upon the general lines of foreign policy and upon the community's fundamental "way of life" is almost unanimous. If and when the British are in error, they err resolutely and all, or nearly all, together.

The limitations and drawbacks of the experiment once known by the name of socialism were gradually revealed by experience. Socialists were disappointed, and their opponents were relieved, when their dream (or their nightmare) came true; and passion on both sides died away. "So that's all it amounts to," they said with a sigh—in the one case of regret, in the other of relief.

The economic potential left untapped by the former régime was not such that full employment could suddenly release a flood of unparalleled wealth. But neither Conservatives nor Socialists would tolerate a return to the stagnation and unemployment of the years between the wars. Moreover, they know, or think they know, how to control the trade cycle—at least sufficiently to avoid the ravages of a major depression. The techniques of economic stability and expansion are no longer the patent of one party or one doctrine; they have quite lost their ideological colouring.

Nationalisation of the means of production

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has been followed neither by miraculous benefits nor by disaster. In itself, it has had little effect upon the workers' conditions or upon industrial relations. It is not free from certain of the disadvantages of private trusts and monopolies; and while it clearly abolishes the political influence formerly available to the magnates of industry, it still allows the directors of public enterprises the chance to obtain certain privileges for themselves or, more especially, for their undertakings.

REDISTRIBUTION of wealth in Britain has succeeded in reducing the highest incomes and eliminating cases of extreme poverty. But in the long run a family of modest means loses as much or more through crushing taxation as it gains in free social benefits. The victims of Labour's revolution have been, above all, the salaried middle class and its intellectuals, upon whom cultural continuity and scientific progress depend.

People do not argue any longer for or against state interference in economic affairs, but only about the most effective form of such interference and how to adapt administrative decisions to the mechanism of the markets. Practical experience of planning has induced a good many economists to moderate the hopes they placed in it, has taught the all-out supporters of full employment the difficulty of combining this with stable prices, and has led many Keynesians to prefer indirect financial and budgetary controls to direct methods. These controversies evoke no heat, even among specialists. But there are intellectuals who seek to raise the temperature. Death duties amounting to confiscation are called for in the name of equality; and a few voices are raised for further nationalisation—either to facilitate planning or to give the workers a greater interest in the control of industry. But these specifics, which are to be found in the *New Fabian Essays*, have little appeal for the people, or even for political leaders. It is more or less confusedly realised by leaders and people alike that the real historical problem is a different one: namely, how can society combine a fair distribution of income and security for the individual with the incentives which are necessary if wealth is to be increased? The problems raised in England by the Labour experiment are related philosophically and historically to the antinomy between contented security and adventure for gain, between equalitarian justice and the justice of rewards—an antinomy whose resolution calls for a reasonable compromise and not a clear-cut choice.

For the time being, a non-millennial socialism and a non-reactionary conservatism offer England a peaceful government and a peaceful opposition. When Sir Winston used a version (somewhat simplified) of the argument of Hayek's book, *The Road to Serfdom*, as ammunition in the 1945 election, his allusions to Mr. Attlee's "Gestapo" merely provoked laughter. Theorists may insist that Labour will end, however unintentionally, by creating a totalitarian state, but the British are not inclined to worry about the day after tomorrow; and today Mr. Bevan is a pillar of parliamentarianism. No "leftist" sees any merit in Communism as far as Britain is concerned. The Bevanites, more insular than anybody, believe that the Labour Party should be the model for the whole world, though they concede that Communism may be "progressive" for Asia, for Africa, and even perhaps—who knows?—for France.

Controversy in Britain does become heated when it touches upon the United States and the U.S.S.R. and the case for or against a capitalist or Soviet régime. Left-wing intellectuals in Britain are as ready as those on the Continent to denounce American "materialism," "ineptitude," or "bellicosity." Like their Parisian friends of *Les Temps Modernes* and *l'Observateur*, they play down the military threat of Communism and emphasise the danger of its political influence; they pin all their hopes to an unlimited application of Point Four and are indulgent to the cruelties of Russia while implacably condemning any error or folly or infraction of liberty in the United States. Their No. 1 target is McCarthy and not the MVD, and their tears are for Alger Hiss and not the victims in concentration camps. Yet these intellectuals remain firmly fixed, in practice if not in theory, within the framework

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of British society. In France, the popular front, in China, Stalinism, may be the way of salvation—but for Britain, Queen and Parliament suffice. In all countries, nationalism works strange paradoxes in the soul of the intellectual.

2. *The Debate in France*

For twenty-five years, a vast literature has been accumulating around the political, economic, and social aspects of the Third and Fourth Republics. The voting habits of the different regions, the constitution of the political parties, and the workings of parliament have all been studied. Demographers have analysed the causes and effects of a reduced birthrate and economists have done the same for a retarded economic development. Much still remains to be known, but the general outline of France's contemporary problem has been clearly established: weakness of the executive, insufficient economic dynamic, extreme diversity of agriculture from region to region, fiscal and customs legislation favouring the survival of too many small-scale businesses, excessive growth of the tertiary sector of the economy, an unrationalised distributive system, and so on. Foreign criticisms of France rely for all their ideas, facts, and statistics upon French books, including official publications. Never has a nation known so well what was wrong with it.

According to Marx, the concentration of capital would proceed to its extreme limit—but we find French socialists and trade unionists lamenting an insufficient concentration of French capital. It requires a lot of dialectical imagination as well as considerable ignorance to attribute the survival of a decentralised productive system to the machinations of "the Trusts." The anomaly to be explained might be called "the retarded economic progress of a Western society" or "the tendency of a petit-bourgeois society to stagnate."

This problem is recognised by sociologists and economists, and not completely ignored by men of letters. But the latter are generally more concerned to replace the specific national problem by what appears to be a universal one, and they achieve this by transposing the real data of the situation into Marxist terms. You may find side by side, in the same work, an empirical study of the French working class and a quasi-metaphysical speculation upon the historical mission of the Proletariat. The former will be prosaic and accurate, the latter inspirational and, in most cases, meaningless.

Consider the periodicals in which the Existentialists, "progressives," and left-Christians write. They are full of para-Marxist notions like the Revolution, the Recognition of Man by Man, and the Meaning of History. Just as the intellectuals of Germany around 1930 were elaborating the millennial Marxist themes with variations from Kant and Hegel and Heidegger, so our French intellectuals today are re-vamping them in the Sartrian or the Christian mode.

Is France going through a crisis comparable to that of Germany in the years before Hitler came to power? There are certainly some analogies, but there are also fundamental differences. French intellectuals feel humiliated, deep down, by their country's fall; and their reaction to this unacknowledged shame is to rebel against the world around them, assisted by escapist ideologies with universal and millennial pretensions. But the social situation in France today is quite different from that in Germany in 1930. There are no millions of unemployed nor uprooted masses ready to follow any adventurer. Discontent is widespread and endemic, but does not exclude an unexpressed wish to safeguard a familiar way of life. It does not imply a desire for change at all costs.

It is true that a great many French workers, perhaps the majority, vote for the Communist Party; but the Communist infiltration into the working-class industrial and political movement is of more help to conservatism than to radicalism. It is easy to rally the moderates in all classes against a party directed from abroad. The adherence of a large part of the French working-class to Communism presents left-wing intellectuals with an agonising choice. As anti-Communists, are they not the enemies of the Proletariat? (Sartre dixit: "To oppose the Proletariat is to become the enemy

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of mankind and of oneself.") As Communists, will they not have retroactively to ratify the Hitler-Stalin pact as a step towards the liberation of humanity, denounce Beria as a capitalist agent, and accept dialectical materialism as the final achievement of philosophy? At odds with their country, which they believe is sinking into mediocrity, allied to the Proletariat whose historic mission they acknowledge, recalcitrant to Communist discipline, they give vent to their frustrations by vituperating the United States and the Atlantic Pact.

The controversies of French intellectuals gain in resonance as they move further from reality. It is the French who provide the left intelligentsia all over the world with the arguments and ideas that throw a cloak of philosophic respectability over *le double refus*. The means for speeding up France's economic progress interest only the specialists; the intellectuals are interested in the debate on "Revolt" and "Revolution." So vague are its concepts and so noble the words that clothe them, so ill-defined is the subject of debate, that even the Japanese, oblivious of crude reality, have seen in them the reflection of their own preoccupations.

The subject of the debate in Britain is technical; in France it is ideological. In the first case, all are agreed about fundamentals and the discussion is about questions of degree and the efficaciousness of methods; in the second, the facts are forgotten and an attempt is made to force into a framework, derived from Marxism, a historical situation which could easily be understood, on the simple condition of *not* approaching it with out-of-date concepts.

In politics, action is more likely to succeed when thought corresponds to fact; and in France the two are out of step. Yet, in the intellectual sphere, the effort and the reward are less disproportionate. The discussion is sterile when it concerns ill-defined notions (for example: Is the Soviet Union the embodiment of the revolutionary cause?) or false ones (the absurd belief that a property system, as such, can be responsible for a nation's wealth or poverty). But, if the French debate often loses itself in abstractions and anachronisms, it sometimes touches the essential. A radical questioning of industrial civilisation or of working-class reformism goes deeper than a reasonable discussion of the Welfare State or of economic incentives—though these latter considerations certainly have more bearing upon the prosperity of nations.

3. *The United States and Germany*

BRITAIN and France, respectively, represent the extremes of relevance and irrelevance between a nation's real situation and its social-economic ideologies. Most of the European nations can easily be identified with one or other of these types: the Scandinavian nations and Holland with the British, Italy with the French. Belgium, although so much exposed to French influence, shows in politics an increasing resemblance to the British type: its Communist party has continuously declined ever since the first elections after the war, and the leftism of its "progressives" appears more and more as a fashion imported from Paris.

It is possible to adumbrate a sociological or historical explanation of these two contrasted types. Countries of the first type have a relatively high standard of living and have experienced no recent revolutionary upheavals. In all of them (except Belgium) the Protestant reformation won the day; they belong to the seafaring and merchant-city zone of European civilisation; and they have developed moderate socialist movements which by-pass the dilemma of *status quo* vs. revolution. France and Italy, on the other hand, are Catholic countries in which the permanent opposition to the Church inevitably assumes a political complexion. In both countries, economic progress and higher living standards for the workers have been retarded through the survival of underdeveloped areas. And both have, by virtue of their large Communist movements, suffered a *secessio plebis*.

Germany and the United States will not fit into either of these categories. If we accepted the current language of social-economic controversy, we should be in danger of seeing Germany, less than ten years after Hitler's death, as the fatherland of "social liberalism" (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*), while the United States would seem to have been saved in the

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nick of time, by the Republican victory of 1952, from a socialist invasion led by the Democrats. But once again the facts are quite different.

As regards Western Germany, the decisive fact appears to be the complete collapse of the two German ideologies—Marxism and Nazism—which aimed at the conquest of the world. The Germans have lived the nationalist frenzy through to its bitter end, and their experience of the Soviet régime is incomparably more direct than that of any other West European people. For the present, they are immune to certain arguments and certain illusions. An orator, even if he were a French philosopher, who tried to explain to German workmen that the prohibition of strikes and the suppression of free unions is legitimate in Russia because the workers are in power there, would not be allowed to finish his speech. Unlike the French philosophers, the German workers know what life under the Communist Party is like. The majority of them continue to vote socialist, but all the evidence shows that they no longer subscribe to Marxist ideas. They refuse to listen to the once classic themes of Class Struggle and Revolution. They have become as reasonable and empirical as the British workers, though with this difference—that they have lived through the messianic temptation while the British ignored it. Purged by catastrophe—for the time being, at all events—Germany prides itself on reviving the pure liberal doctrine.

It is a pious claim which cannot be said to be completely fulfilled. The entrepreneurs or managers in the Ruhr still possess exorbitant power, and the structure and functioning of the economy are far from conforming to the classic liberal model. It is true that Chancellor Adenauer's government allows freer markets than are to be found in other countries. But the foundation of Western Germany's spectacular recovery has been hard work, the volume of investment and construction, and the moderation and discipline of the workers—all of which have perhaps been encouraged, but certainly not created, by Dr. Erhard's policies. The Federal Republic's climate is conservative, bourgeois, and nationalist in the style of Kaiser Wilhelm's bourgeoisie, but worlds away from that of the Nazi desperadoes. The overriding preoccupation is economic and not ideological. Communism and Russia are identified, and equally hated; American productivity is admired; and there is no remaining trace of that blend of philosophy with politics which characterised the Weimar period and is today so attractive to the French intelligentsia.

IN THE United States there appears to be a passionate political and ideological controversy all the time. The violence of the language suggests that fundamental issues are involved; but in reality little more is at stake than in Britain. The polemical vehemence of the daily and weekly press is a part of the country's political style; but it is also a result of the incongruity between the party ideologies and the changing realities of the last twenty-five years.

Many Republicans still hate Roosevelt as they hate their country's enemies—Roosevelt who brought socialism to America, Roosevelt who created the Leviathan State. The old American society, as the typical Republican imagines it, was a model of liberalism. Its prosperity grew from individual initiative; it prevented the growth of the federal budget and federal taxation; it tolerated no meddling with the nation's economy by government officials; it eschewed wholesale social services. An individualistic society like this probably never existed except in theory, and in any case could not now be revived. When the Republicans returned to power after twenty years, they laboured to reduce taxation by a few billions, dismissed some tens of thousands of officials, and tightened the control of credit, but they left the essential work of the Democrats untouched. Social services will continue to expand, agricultural prices will be maintained, and national prosperity will still be the Government's responsibility. In case of economic crisis, or the threat of crisis, the Republican method of intervention will perhaps be slightly different from the Democratic. Republicans prefer tax relief and Democrats public spending; the former are more afraid of inflation, the latter of deflation. Their differences are at bottom

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much the same as those between Conservatives and Socialists in Britain.

The Republicans try to make their audience's flesh creep by the same methods as Sir Winston Churchill in the 1945 election. TVA, they howl, is the thin end of the Gestapo's wedge. Socialised medicine and a low interest-rate are denounced in the United States as though they must inevitably lead to the MVD. It would be a mistake to regard such accusations as a mere electoral ruse. They are, on the whole, sincere; and, although those who make them may not have read Hayek and Mises, they have instinctively developed the same mentality. They attribute a sort of absolute value to free markets and regard any manipulation of prices by the government as a profanation. Private initiative is regarded as intrinsically good and the development of governmental activity as intrinsically bad. And in the end these reasonable preferences become fanatical. In a sense, the fanaticism of leftist doctrinaires is really less unreasonable, because the champions of socialism think they possess the secret of salvation. But liberals, who put their faith in men's natural instincts, ought not to be surprised if the individual fails to see a competitive economy as the supreme goal. They should remember that although "May the best man win" is a popular slogan in sport, there are not so many people who accept it as a rule for life.

THE superficial violence of dispute by no means precludes a proud sense of American uniqueness when compared with Europe, and enlightened opinion is implicitly or even explicitly unanimous upon a fundamental point, "The American Way of Life." No one judges the European (and especially the French) industrialist more severely than his American counterpart. When the members of the National Association of Manufacturers denounce the "feudalism" and the greed for high profits from small transactions of their European counterparts, they are indulging a repressed desire to see themselves as "progressives." But is it a true description to say that the American economy is alertly competitive, and that the European ones are stagnating under cartels and controls? What appears to me incontestable is that any "competitiveness" in the American economy is not due to its structure but to the spirit that animates it. The structure cannot be called liberal in contradistinction to a socialist structure in France or Britain, for it is exposed to much the same sort of "socialist" intervention as European economies are accused of. Such competition as there is can often be described as "oligopolistic" rather than classically liberal. Geography, history, and social climate change as you cross the Atlantic, as they do between Germany and Britain; and these national contrasts have not much connection with what are called ideological differences.

Opinion in the United States almost unanimously accepts the present system. No alternative is apparent either to the intellectual or to the man in the street, and, in effect, there is none. Should a crisis comparable to that of 1929 occur—which I do not think likely—it would be met by some form of planning (which would nevertheless be claimed as liberalism). The present régime has created immense wealth and distributed it among the people. Inequality has diminished proportionately with the rising standard of life. The approach of the United States to these objectives—which were and are also those of the European Left—has been empirical. What motive is there for resisting the process? For the sake of what could a revolution be made?

But there is still much to criticise, and especially the tendency to conformism which results from the loss of messianic hope. Even the war of the American Left against the trusts and the concentration of economic power is losing its point. American thinking is in need of "dissidents," but there is a danger that dissent will adopt out-of-date ideologies instead of pin-pointing the problems and injustices which official optimism tends to gloss over.

At the moment the two great current controversies are those about McCarthyism and about the correct policy towards Communism in Asia and Europe. McCarthyism raises the question of civil liberties and of what measures a free society is justified in taking against conspiracy and infiltration. Unfortunately, the debate remains confused because both sides resort to "amalgams"; both "McCarthyism"

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and "Communism" become in the minds of their adversaries a sort of huge morass with no firm outline. As regards Communism, American scholarly literature seems to me the best available in the Western world. On the other hand, current controversy confuses two questions which a realistic approach would separate: namely, what should our *opinion* be about this or that aspect of Communism in China, Poland, etc., and what should or can be our *action* in regard to Soviet power in Europe and Asia? Condemnation of Communism too often becomes a sort of refusal to look at the unclean thing or even to admit its existence.

Once again, as in Britain though in a different way, the ideological dispute is concerned less with the country's internal affairs than with foreign affairs. In the long run, there is really no controversy in America except about Communism, which nevertheless all are touchingly unanimous in condemning.

4. Outside the Western World

FRANCE and Italy have large Communist parties, and the other Western countries have small ones which are centres for espionage and conspiracy rather than proper political organisations. In both cases, Communism is a serious problem of internal or foreign policy, but in neither is it a serious intellectual problem.

Roughly speaking, there are two ways of adhering to Communism. The militant Communist accepts the world-view and the changing interpretations of history imposed upon him by authority; the intellectual, on the other hand, takes the official doctrine with a grain of salt but accepts Communism as the best régime for industrialising under-developed countries, as the "inevitable" outcome of Europe's decline, and so on. If an important number of intellectuals accepted the orthodox doctrine, Communism would be an essential element of Western intellectual life. But such is not the case.

Orthodox Communism consists in forcing events totally unlike those foreseen by Marx into the millenary Marxist scheme. For it, the capture of power in Russia by the Bolshevik party was the first stage of the historic mission attributed by Marx to the Proletariat. Having baptised the Party as "vanguard of the Proletariat," it equates all its victories with Proletarian victories. Wherever Stalin or Malenkov reign, the Proletariat is mystically liberated. It follows that the old familiar practices of despotism, furbished with modern techniques, become the embodiment of "socialism." Every revolution engineered by the Red Army in Europe and every revolution organised by the Communist Party in Asia, controlled by intellectuals who manipulate the peasant masses, will be called socialist and will claim the author of *Das Kapital* as its founder.

This is a paranoiac interpretation of history. What Marx hoped was that the victory of the working class would lead to a universal distribution of the profits from highly developed productive forces, profits which—so he thought—would be restricted under capitalism to the few and would produce increasing poverty for the masses. But the Communist revolutions are imposed before the productive forces have been developed, while the Western countries are distributing ever more widely the profits accruing from technical progress. Soviet régimes certainly develop the means of production, but they sacrifice very much more to what Marx called "accumulation" than capitalist society ever did.

I am not here concerned to discuss the merits or demerits of the Soviet régime, either in Russia or China. It is unnecessary to make it the incarnation of Evil or a unique event in the annals of crime. There are enough facts accepted by critics and supporters alike to enable us to place the régime in history, as one among others. If liberty and equality are the test of socialism, no régime could be less socialist than that of the U.S.S.R. It has restored a rigid hierarchy, with a new ruling class; factory discipline is stricter than in capitalist countries; power is in the hands of a small group which took possession of the state by violence, and is kept in power by police and propaganda. Admittedly, it has built up an immense heavy industry and given the country an unprecedented war potential. Let us pay tribute to the organising power which carried through this vast industrialisation. But why should we do what has never before been done

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in history—why should we regard the builders of empires or pyramids or marble underground stations as benefactors of humanity?

To what extent is the Soviet type of overall planning an efficient one? There is no answer to this question that would be accepted by all economists. But no serious economist would maintain that an industrial society must inevitably resort in the end to planning of the Soviet type; nor is there one who believes that the American or British economic systems must lead to poverty for the masses and economic stagnation. Most economists, even those who sympathise with Communism, consider the present Soviet régime a prelude to the Western type of economy rather than a postscript to it. Or again they may expect a gradual rapprochement of the two worlds, through liberalisation in Russia and intensified planning in the West.

Marx's philosophy and theory provide no firmer ground than does his economic analysis for the Communist interpretation of contemporary history. There is no Western philosopher who takes dialectical materialism for anything more than an ideology of a state or a secular theology; and even socialist-minded economists reject the Labour theory of value. Someone may detect in *Das Kapital* a foreshadowing of Keynesian ideas; but a serious intellectual who calls himself a Marxist accepts neither Stalin's philosophy nor the theories of *Das Kapital*. It is not impossible that the Soviet Union, fortified by the revolutions in Asia, and possessor by conquest of Eastern Europe, may succeed a few years or a few decades from now, in destroying Western society; but this does not mean that Communism is a serious intellectual movement. A few hundred divisions and an ideology for the use of semi-intellectuals are enough to create a menace.

Those who join the Party without accepting the official doctrine are numerous, and it is easy to explain their actions. It is necessary and sufficient in each case to discover why the peasant, worker, or intellectual feels himself aggrieved and alienated from his own country, why he expects nothing from reform and places all his hopes in the Fatherland of the Revolution. Nevertheless, the fact that the Soviet Union, which is in reality so Russian, attracts the rebels of the whole world through an ideology borrowed from the West, has important political consequences.

COMMUNISM'S attractive power is strongest where it can justify itself realistically (speeding-up of industrialisation) and ideologically (the Party as "vanguard of the Proletariat" with its historic mission). In a sense, this is the case in France, whose *polytechniciens* are irritated by her tardy economic progress. It is even more so in the underdeveloped countries where the scope and significance of ideologies from Europe and America are distorted by the historical background.

In Europe, a political and economic ideology is concerned with the no-man's-land which is at stake in party struggles. It ignores the family and everyday life, and all the ideas and habits inherited from pre-industrial times. The controversy between conservatism and progress is fruitful because tradition is not seen as an obstacle to economic progress, which is itself a development from the traditional past which it is desired to conserve or extend. In the Far East, on the other hand, the controversy is between the West on the one hand and Chinese, or Japanese, or Indian cultures on the other; and on the social-economic plane this controversy is bound to end in favour of the West, for all nations aspire to the wealth and power derived from machines and technical prowess.

The East has had to create what was "given" for the West. In the 19th century, there were discussions in the West about the source of legitimate power and the forms of authority; but economic progress was equally compatible, in bourgeois France for example, with constitutional or with absolute monarchy, with cæsarism or with a republic. In China, however, the first condition of economic progress may well have been a modification of the family structure and the creation of a Western type of bureaucracy. European political ideologies take on a new colour when it is a question of bringing into existence new familial and state institutions which the

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Western doctrines do not mention because they take them for granted.

Since progress in the social-economic sphere is almost unanimously accepted as an imperative (the ruling class and the intellectuals in Asia and Africa are now practically without a trace of Gandhi's hostility to the machine), the real choice is between reforms and revolution; and this is easily translated into European terms as Socialism or Communism. But the terms thus translated disguise the enormous difference between the Indian and the British situations, or between the Russian and the Chinese.

India may provide a minimum wage, guarantees against arbitrary dismissal, and social regulations in industry; but these measures do nothing to eliminate the causes of extreme poverty. All they do is give an additional advantage to those lucky enough to have jobs in factories over the countless unemployed in town and country alike. To give priority to fair shares and individual security is really impracticable in conditions of famine when the first essential is to produce as much as possible.

Indian intellectuals, like those of Oxford and Cambridge, believe in parliamentary methods; they are generally "pinks" of the same shade as the *New Statesman*. The difference is that, instead of governing 50 million Britons who respect their Queen and Parliament and have enough to eat, they have to govern 365 million Indians, 85 per cent of them illiterate, who have been accustomed for centuries to obey their masters and to have no say either in affairs of State or in their own. Can the place of an emperor, whether Mogul or British, be taken by a political class playing the parliamentary game?

As for China, she is beginning her Soviet experiment with even scantier resources in technicians and machinery than the Russia of 1913; but in spite of this, her imitation of the Russian model is less awkward than India's attempt to copy Britain. A tyranny can effect changes more easily than a democracy, and Russia's technique of forced saving under the control of Party and police is an easy one to export.

In Japan, the old ruling class of pre-industrial times was able by itself to Westernise the state and property institutions, the industrial and educational systems, while maintaining the country's independence. Today, after the imperialist adventure and defeat, the intellectuals are suffering from this national humiliation and are contemplating the drab future which opens before themselves and their countrymen. Japan is the most highly industrialised country of Asia, with the highest living standards; but its intellectuals, like those of France, feel alienated because they have lost their old gods and are intensely aware of the discrepancy between their wishful dreams and the reality they have to face. One finds among the Left in Japan the same frustration and nostalgias as in France, and the same camouflage of authentic experience and conflict under a more or less vulgarised Marxism.

In China, a Communist party of the Soviet type which breaks up the traditional structure of the family, purges the classic culture, and constructs a planning State; in Japan, intellectuals who feel half-estranged from their stricken country and borrow their anti-Americanism and their Leftism from the French intelligentsia; in India, intellectuals with democratic values acquired from Britain but governing in a totally different situation. . . . The Soviet Union, France, and Britain provide the models, but what are such models worth in Asia? Is not the true issue, hidden behind social-economic controversies, the clash between the West and the national cultures of the East?

5. *Conclusion*

In most Western societies, ideological controversy is dying down because experience has shown that divergent demands can be reconciled, and has refuted the exaggerated hopes placed in Revolution. There is no incompatibility between political liberty and wealth, or between free markets and a higher standard of life. Indeed, the highest living standards have been attained in democratic countries with a relatively free economy.

As industrial civilisation develops, tensions arise between the concern for equality and individual security and the concern for

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increased production. With full employment and the danger of inflation, there is a struggle to maintain freedom of wage agreements. The limits of possible redistribution of income are revealed, and also the effects of excessive taxation upon savings and upon the financing of capital goods. There is no final solution to these dilemmas, but the reasonable anxieties they evoke do not give rise to any fundamental conflict. Indeed, it is precisely over degrees and methods of compromise that the political parties carry on their debate.

The apparent ideological chaos is due to a misinterpretation of the interaction of disparate events; the crises taking place in some Western societies, the African and Asian revolt against the West, and the attraction of the Soviet Union (which is derived less from what it is than from what it claims to be). In reality, the alienation of the intellectuals and the grievances of the workers in France are due to the specific conditions of French society; similarly, the action of the Communist party machine, and its organisation of the peasant masses, can also be specifically explained, but not in terms of capitalism or socialism.

I am not here concerned to discuss how the Asian and African independence movements can be weaned from totalitarian methods, or how countries that have achieved independence, but are still weak, can be protected from sovietisation. But one thing is certain: the West should begin by getting rid of its inferiority complex before the idea of Revolution. Some revolutions have been sterile, and others fruitful. Some have replaced the old élite by a more efficient one, swept away petrified institutions, and opened the way for new initiatives. But the revolutions of the 20th century have settled down into long-term despotism, prolonging for decades the phenomena of terrorism which used to be characteristic of the first revolutionary frenzy. The Soviet phenomena, therefore, need neither perplex nor fascinate Western intellectuals, provided only they consent to open their eyes and refrain from seeking an impossible perfection in human society.

Moreover, revolutionary ardour has cooled down in the last twenty-five years. Yesterday, the French intellectual who symbolised Revolution was Malraux—a fighter in China and Spain, author of *La Condition Humaine* and *L'Espoir*. Today, the revolutionary activity of Sartre fizzles out in interminable essays about the Proletariat. As Marx said, we live twice through the same events, first tragically and then comically.

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Five Poems by Cavafis

Translated by Philip Sherrard

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE:—The early poems of the Alexandrian Greek poet Constantine Cavafis (1863–1933) in the main reflect the fashionable literary attitudes of the last decades of the 19th century. Behind them one can discern the compound but somewhat etiolated shadow of such figures as Gautier, as Henri Murger, as Huysmans, as Wilde and Pater, æsthetic, feminine, haunted by a sense of corruption, indifferent to if not scornful of nature, fastidious, devoted to art as the expression and stimulant of fine sensations, and looking upon works of art as little more than a superior and sophisticated form of aphrodisiac.

Some of these early poems of Cavafis have a certain elegance and polish, but they all share one central weakness: Cavafis wrote them without possessing any real personal background, without having made his own a "landscape" of figures, of visibilia, with wider terms of reference than those provided by the rootless *fin de siècle* æstheticism whose moods and attitudes he sought to express. It is always one of the major tasks of a poet to provide himself with such a "landscape," and when society possesses a tradition, the images and symbols of which are common to the great majority of the people, this task is relatively simple. It is when there is no such tradition that it is more difficult. Collective myths, collective terms of reference, lose their hold, the poet no longer shares any recognised background of imagery with the rest of society, and, whether he likes it or not, he is forced more and more into isolation; and if at the same time, as is often the case, he is unable to discover for himself any purpose that transcends his individuality, and has therefore nothing left to value but what concerns the life of the senses only, his poetry is in danger of becoming the mere indulgence of private sentiment and emotion.

It was in such a situation as this that Cavafis found himself. Condemned—whether by choice or by fate is not the question—to that kind of æsthetic life which had been the study of those figures under whose influence he wrote his first poems, how, in giving expression to it, could he yet avoid falling back on the already debased language and imagery of an effete romanticism? Where could he find the "landscape" of figures, the visibilia, adequate to his purpose? Cavafis had no relationship with the Greek demotic tradition on which poets like Solomos and Sikelianos, for instance, could draw with such fruitfulness; to pretend that he had would merely have meant substituting one alien background for another. In any case, the Greek demotic tradition was fundamentally heroic and patriotic, and as such was hardly likely to appeal to Cavafis, who, a colonial Greek, was little concerned with the destinies of a new Greece and whose pessimistic vision foresaw a future of conquest, decay, and death from which relief could be found only in present æsthetic pleasure, in a stoic reserve, and in the recollection of a past already long since perished.

Quite how Cavafis lighted on that "landscape" through which he could speak with greater point and freedom, it is difficult to say. But it may have been that in the modern Alexandria in which he lived there were enough visible reminders of and associations with an older Alexandria to stimulate his curiosity and to suggest that *recherche du temps perdu* which his poetry was increasingly to become. It may have been that in the mixed races and the confusion of tongues, in the Christian churches and the pagan ruins, in the bustle of the port and in the bargaining of merchants in bazaar and market of his contemporary environment, there was enough to wake in Cavafis the latent memory of a whole vanished world in which he could see, as in a mirror, the faithful reflection of that human condition which it was his desire to portray. At all events, behind the mercantilism of present-day Alexandria, Cavafis began to

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discern the lineaments of the great hellenistic Alexandria, the capital of the Ptolemies, centre of a flourishing kingdom and a rich terrain, peopled by Greek, Jew, Egyptian, by all the races of the Middle East. The Alexandria which Cavafis "discovered" was in fact the crown and focus of that extraordinary hellenistic world which included also such famed cities as Antioch and Jerusalem, Seleucis and Ephesus, and numbered kingdoms like those of Syria, of Media, of Commagene, and of Macedonia itself, from which, with the conquests of Alexander the Great, all had begun. It was a curious, chequered world, knit perhaps only by the common Greek language. "Then he was that best of things," Cavafis was to write, "a Hellene: mankind has no quality more precious." And in a mock-serious poem he celebrates the expedition which gave the word Hellene the status it had in that world of which Alexandria was the centre:

> And from that amazing all-Greek expedition,
> the victorious, the brilliant,
> the much talked of, the glorified
> as no other has ever been glorified,
> the incomparable, emerged ourselves:
> the great new hellenic world.
>
> Ourselves: the Alexandrians, the Antiochians,
> the Seleucians, and the countless
> other Greeks of Egypt and of Syria,
> and those in Media, and in Persia, and all the rest.
> With the far-reaching dominations,
> with the various influence of prudent assimilation,
> and the Common Greek Tongue
> which we carried into Bactria, to the Indians.

It was in this hellenistic Alexandrian world, then, that Cavafis found a "landscape" through which he could express himself with pertinence and urbanity. Out of it he was to build his "myth" of a personal and at the same time perennial human condition, that of the tired, rapacious, over-refined man who is the generic hero of his poems, *homo Europaeus*, as we might call him, of our not so late humanist period. For that after all is the figure that emerges from behind the many masks which Cavafis gives him: the sick guest of an æsthetic city, of a Greco-Roman asylum, full of selfish desires and absurd vanities, ageing into impotence and ugliness, purified by every longing, sapped by every depravity, all sentiment and all fatigue, devoted to fate and pain as the morphinist to his drug, lonely, hollowed out, old as the ages, all nostalgia, animal and sage, all bare, with no ambitions, gnawed by the dread of death, by the relentless dance of time that sweeps all that he loves into oblivion, and finding relief only in his art where he can watch with something approaching a detached irony the spectacle of a life of pleasure, folly, misfortune, vice, and sybaritic elegance which he now can never again enjoy. The five poems that follow, which are among the best that Cavafis wrote, express different aspects of his æsthetic city and of the life of which it was the centre.

From the School of the Renowned Philosopher

> Two years he remained a pupil of Ammonius Sakkas;*
> but he was bored both by the philosophy and by Sakkas.
>
> Afterwards he went into politics.
> But he gave them up. The Prefect was an idiot,
> and his entourage solemn and serious-looking blockheads:
> their Greek disgusting, the barbarians.
>
> His curiosity was attracted
> a little by the church: to be baptised
> and to pass as a Christian. But quickly
> he changed his mind. He would quarrel doubtless
> with his parents, ostentatious pagans;
> and they would stop—a frightful thing—
> at once their most generous allowances.

* The philosopher Ammonius (d. A.D. 243; "Sakkas" because he had been a sack-carrier) taught at Alexandria and is supposed to have had both Plotinus and Origen among his pupils.

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He ought however to do something. He became the frequenter
of the corrupted houses of Alexandria,
of every secret haunt of debauchery.

Fortune had been kind to him in this:
she had given him a face handsome to the extreme.
And he enjoyed the divine gift.

At least for ten years yet
would his beauty last. Afterwards—
perhaps he will go again to Sakkas.
Or if in the meantime the old man has died,
he will go to another philosopher or sophist:
there is always someone suitable to be found.

Or in the end possibly he will return
even to politics—laudably remembering
the traditions of his family,
duty towards the country, and other suchlike pomposities.

To Have Had The Care

I have become almost a vagabond and penniless.
This fatal city, Antioch,
has devoured all my money:
this fatal city with its extravagant life.

But I am young and in excellent health.
Prodigious master of Greek
(Aristotle, Plato, I know them through and through,
whatever orator, poet, whatever else you mention).
Of military affairs I am not ignorant,
and I have friendships with the senior among regular officers.
I am acquainted slightly with the administration.
In Alexandria I stayed six months, last year;
something I know (and this is useful) of what goes on there:
of the corruption, and the jobbery, and the rest of it.

Thus I believe I am to the full
indicated to serve this country,
my beloved fatherland, Syria.

To whatever employment they put me I shall endeavour
to be useful to the country. That is my purpose.
If again they hinder me with their systems—
we know them, these officials: need we speak of them now?—
if they hinder me I am not to be blamed.

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I will address myself to Zabinas* first,
and if that fool does not appreciate me,
I shall go to his rival, Grypos.
And if that imbecile does not appoint me,
I shall go at once to Hyrcanus.

At all events one of the three will want me.

And my conscience is quiet
about my indifference to the choice.
The three of them harm Syria to the same extent.

But, a ruined man, I am not to be blamed.
Distressed, I try to make ends meet.
The almighty gods ought to have had the care
to have created a fourth, an honest man.
Delightedly should I have put myself at his disposal.

Myris: Alexandria, A.D. 340

When I learnt of the tragedy, that Myris was dead,
I went to his house, for all that I avoid
going into the houses of Christians,
especially when they have sorrows or festivals.

I stood in the corridor. I did not wish
to enter further within, because I perceived
that the relatives of the dead regarded me
with evident surprise and with displeasure.

They had him in a large room
which from the corner where I stood
I saw a little: all precious carpets,
and objects of silver and of gold.

I stood and I wept in a corner of the corridor.
And I thought how our gatherings and the excursions
without Myris would not be worth while any longer;
and I thought how not any longer should I see him
at our beautiful and disorderly all-night sessions
rejoice, and laugh, and recite verses
with his perfect feeling for the Greek rhythm;
and I thought how I had lost for ever
the young man that with madness I had worshipped.

* Zabinas, Grypos, and Hyrcanus are in fact historical personages, but from the point of view of the poem it is not important to know more about them than the text makes clear: that they had rival interests in the throne of Syria.

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Some old women, close to me, in undertones were speaking
of the last day that he lived—
on his lips continually the name of Christ,
in his hands he held a cross.—
There entered afterwards into the room
four Christian priests, and they said prayers
fervently, and orisons to Jesus,
or to Mary (I do not know their religion well).

We had known, certainly, that Myris was a Christian.
From the first moment we had known it, when
the year before last he had joined our company.
But he lived exactly like us.
Of all of us most given to pleasure;
scattering lavishly his money on amusements.
Indifferent to the world's esteem,
he threw himself eagerly into nocturnal fights
when our band happened to meet
with a rival band.
Never did he speak of his religion.
And once even we told him
that we would take him with us to Serapion.

But it was as if it displeased him,
this joke of ours: I remember now.
Ah, and two other times come now into my mind.
When to Poseidon we made libations,
he drew himself back from our circle, and looked elsewhere.
When enthusiastically one of us
said: "Let our company be under
the favour and the protection of the great,
of the most beautiful Apollo," Myris whispered
(the others did not hear) "with the exception of myself."

The Christian priests with loud voices
were praying for the soul of the young man.—
I noticed with how much diligence
and with what intensive care
for the forms of their religion, they were preparing
all for the Christian funeral.
And suddenly an odd sensation
came upon me. Obscurely I felt
as if Myris had fled from close to me:
I felt that he, a Christian, was united
with his people, and that I had become
distant, very distant; I felt indeed
a doubt approaching me: lest I had been deceived
by my passion, and always I had been distant to him—
I threw myself out from the frightful house,
I fled quickly before it was taken, before it was altered
by their Christianity, the memory of Myris.

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The Melancholy of Jason Kleander, Poet in Commagene, A.D. 595

The ageing of my body and of my beauty
is a wound from a terrible knife.
I have not any resistance.
Towards you I turn, O Art of Poetry,
who somehow know of remedies:
attempts to numb the pain, in Imagination and Word.

It is a wound from a terrible knife.—
Bring your remedies, O Art of Poetry,
that they make—for a little—the wound not to be felt.

Of Demetrius Soter (187-150 B.C.)

The circumstances of this final poem need perhaps explaining. Demetrius Soter was one of the grandchildren of Antiochus the Great, the king of Syria who had lost his kingdom to the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C. Demetrius Soter was sent to Rome as a hostage, but on the death of Antiochus he asked to be set free. The senate refused, and so he escaped secretly. He returned to Syria, the people declared in his favour, and finally he obtained recognition as king from the Romans. He expelled the satrap Heracleides from Babylon, thus earning the title Soter. But through the excesses of his life he lost his people's support, was overthrown by an impostor, Balas, and killed by him in battle. Cavafis pictures him as it were in soliloquy, after his overthrow and before his death, as he realises that the whole hellenistic world, the way of life it stood for, and his own efforts to restore both, have come to an end, can never return, and that others, of a different temper, rule the land. The significance of all this in Cavafis' "myth" does not need pointing out.

His every expectation has turned out wrong!

He had imagined performing famous deeds,
to end the humiliation that from the time of the battle
of Magnesia oppresses his fatherland.
That Syria become again a powerful state,
with her armies, with her fleets,
with her big fortresses, with her wealth.

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He suffered, he became bitter at Rome
when he felt in the conversations of his friends,
the youth of the great families,
that they showed to him, to the son
of King Seleukos Philopater—
when he felt that none the less there was always a secret
contempt for the hellenising dynasties:
that they are fallen, are not fit for anything serious,
quite unsuited for the leadership of peoples.
He withdrew alone, and he became indignant, and he swore
that it would not be at all as they imagined;
why, he himself has will-power;
he will struggle, he will achieve, he will exalt.

Enough to find a way of getting to the East,
to succeed in escaping from Italy—
and all this strength that he has
within his soul, all this
energy he will communicate to the people.

Ah, only to find himself in Syria!
So young he left his country
that scarcely he remembers her appearance.
But in his thoughts he has always visualised her

as something holy which with reverence you approach,
as the sight of a lovely place, as the vision
of Greek cities and of Greek ports.—

And now?
Now desolation and sorrow.

They were right, the young men at Rome.
It is not possible for them to endure, the dynasties
that resulted from the Occupation of the Macedonians.

It does not matter: he himself has striven,
he has struggled as much as he could.
And in his black disappointment
one thing alone he takes account of still
with pride: that, even in his failure,
he presents to the world the same indomitable courage.

For the rest—they were dreams and vanities.
This Syria, almost it does not seem to be his country;
this Syria is the land of Heracleides and of Balas.

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Men and Ideas

Leslie A. Fiedler: WALT WHITMAN

IT is important to remember that *Leaves of Grass* was in its original conception an anonymous poem. Even its author seems more than once in the course of thirty years of revision to have forgotten that fact; and certainly he became convinced, before the end of his life, that it was a guilty secret to be hidden with all the resources of a furtiveness of which he liked to boast. The signed proem, the endless insistence upon the first person, the deliberate confusion of the mask and the self: all these come to conceal the truth which the anonymous title page of the first edition confesses: that the "Walt Whitman" who appears in the text of the poems of the *Leaves of Grass* is (*a Persona*) really created by the poems themselves. An "eidolon," Whitman preferred to call it—or more simply "My Fancy." And in a prevision of his own death, he confesses the doubleness of image and self:

Good-bye my Fancy!
Farewell dear mate, dear love!
I'm going away, I know not where,
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,
So Good-bye my Fancy.

It is his farewell to his truest love, but he will not admit finally that even dying can sever them:

Yet let me not be too hasty,
Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really blended into one;
Then if we die we die together (yes, we'll remain one). . . .
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs, (who knows?)
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning. . . .

There is the real romantic madness in this, the irrational conviction that made Balzac cry out for a doctor of his own inventing on his deathbed, and which leads Whitman to dream that he and the fictive "Walt" will share all eternity.

Emerson, who felt so deeply into *Leaves of Grass* in his first reading, knew its namelessness and realised that the poem's "Walt Whitman" could not really exist. "I did not know until I last night saw the book advertised in a newspaper that I could trust the name as real and available for a post-office," he wrote to Whitman. It was not, of course, "Walt" who answered but "Walt's" promoter, rubbing his hands together and bowing like a salesman over his goods. "Master, I am a man who has perfect faith. Master, we have not come through centuries, tastes, heroisms, fables to halt in this land today. . . ."

It sounds like an impersonation, even a parody, and in a sense it is. Later, Whitman was to learn to play his own "eidolon" with more conviction, in reviews, introductions, and conversation; but never, except in his most intense poetic moments, could he help somehow travestying the beloved Fancy that possessed him only when it would. I do not share an admiration for Whitman's prose, which has for me generally the sense of pushing, thrusting —being by brute force "Walt Whitman." The comparison inevitably suggests itself of the medium who fakes at blank moments the real experience that comes too rarely.

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It is Whitman's own fault (and that of the disciples whom he suffered only too willingly) that metaphors of table-tapping and the Beyond come so readily to our minds. One did not become a Child of Nature in the 19th century by attempting to eschew culture; one became, in so far as one failed, a literary version of the Child of Nature; and in so far as one succeeded, a creature of sub-culture, of the world of "cosmic consciousness" and phrenology that lurks below the surface of what can be properly called ideas. In the latter sense, Whitman is the Mary Baker Eddy of American poetry; in the former, he is its Ossian; and it is upon the literary analogy that I want to insist in order to redeem Whitman from animal magnetism to art.

OSSIAN and Chatterton, as examples of the artificial "natural," the higher hoax as romantic poetry—indeed, Whitman has much in common with such poets, especially (one suspects) the sense that the seeming fraud is the actual truth, that the writer is really possessed by the spirit he seems to invent; and he shares with the two earlier poets the anonymity they felt was needed to "take in" the reader and to establish for themselves the higher truth of the impersonation. In the Ossianic poet, however, only the fictive singer is real, it is McPherson who does not exist; while Whitman has the advantage of playing a contemporary role, so that he is free to drop the cumbersome device of the "translated" or "discovered" manuscript—and has only to become in public life the Person he has invented: that is to say, to counterfeit himself rather than the text.

It is tempting to see Whitman as the tragic victim of his own imposture. Certainly, as the years and the editions went by, the name "Walt Whitman" crept from its place within the poem to the outside spine of the book. The anonymous author almost irrecoverably disappeared, lying, distorting, destroying all evidence of any life beyond the fictive one of his own legend. Even his face changed along with his stance and his costume, as he willed himself from photograph to photograph into the image of the Rowdy, the Christ, the Workman's Friend, the Beard and the Butterfly, The Good Grey Poet. The single portrait of the anonymous author that survives by mistake shocks us: a dark-suited, indolent dandy with a modest beardlet. We believe only what the poem tells us, that "Walt" was never dressed in black, that he is

Of pure American breed, of reckless health, his body perfect, free from taint from top to toe, free forever from headache and dyspepsia, clean-breathed,
Ample-limbed, a good feeder . . . bearded, calm, unrefined. . . .

The revelations of the autopsy, "the left suprarenal capsule tubercular . . . a cyst the size of a pigeon's egg," or the glimpses in contemporary memories of the young shy dreamer who drank only water and was never "bothered up" by a woman, these affect us like slander: nature slandering art.

But Walt Whitman was finally the master of the actual, achieving by will the Mask he dreamed. It is revealing to see him through the letters of the *Wound Dresser*, walking the wards of the Washington hospitals during the Civil War: oppressed by headaches, worrying about his weight, fussing like an old grandmother with his jars of jam, secretly titillated by all those beautiful young men so touchingly maimed—and yet somehow really exuding the strength and health which he did not even possess. By the time he had invented the Good Grey Poet, he had burned away all of himself that was not the image. "The secret" at which he eternally hinted was now untellable; perhaps he had actually forgotten it. With the death of his mother, the anonymous poet (who had been above all that mother's boy) was dead; and Whitman's subsequent paralysis was a declaration, as it were, that his body was now quite simply his book—to be slipped into the blouses of young men, to lie next to the flesh of their breasts in innocence:

Or if you will, thrust me beneath your clothing,
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your hips. . . .

The poem had become a man, but the man in

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turn had become the poem. If this is a "pose" or a "fraud," it is not one we can despise.

NO, IF we are uncomfortable these days with Walt Whitman, it is not because he pretended to be what he is not. Our judgements are not so simple. "Above all to thine own self be true . . ." was good enough advice in the mouth of one surer than we are about what is the self. It is because the motives of Whitman's masquerade were so literary and conventional, and because the image of the poet which he proposed to himself is such a rag-bag of vulgarised Rousseau, Goethe, George Sand, Carlyle, Emerson, and God knows what else, eked out with phrenology and Fourth-of-July rhetoric, that we hesitate before him. If Whitman were really the monster of health and sympathy he paints himself, really the solemn discoverer of a New Sex or even of an ideal America, we could not abide him for a moment. It is the poet who feared literature, the sly old maid finally trapped by his own cunning, who is our Whitman; and the point of our *Leaves of Grass* lies precisely in the distance between the poet and his "eidolon." If that distance did not exist, Whitman would have been laughed out of existence by the first sophomore who snickered at "*I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious. . . .*"

I remember not many years ago a black-bordered notice in the little American magazine, *Furioso*, advising certain of its contributors that Walt Whitman was dead. And it is true that a Walt Whitman, a series of Walt Whitmans have been destroyed, leaving only the poet who peers cunningly from behind his most portentous statements to tip us the wink:

To begin with take warning, I am surely different from what you suppose;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal? . . .
Do you think I am trusty and faithful,
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?

or who in double irony speaks as the Persona doubting the reality of the "real" Whitman: "*that shadow my likeness*" who goes "*chattering, chaffering*" about the business of earning a living. "*How often,*" remarks the poetic image, "*I question and doubt whether that is really me.*" The continual manipulation of the illusion in *Leaves of Grass*, the ambiguity of the "I" and the irony of its confrontations ("*O take my hand Walt Whitman!*" "*What do you hear Walt Whitman!*")—this is far from the rant of a naïvely egoistic poet; it is a Mannerist device, subtle and witty. To remember that *Leaves of Grass* is an anonymous poem, is to notice that it is a humorous one.

Whitman's humour is an aspect of the poet seldom touched on, for it was long lost behind the constructions of those searching the poem for "*a real heroic man,*" or hopefully taking its size for a guarantee of its epic intentions. The lyrical impulse swollen to epical proportions produces either conscious irony or unwitting absurdity. In Whitman there is much of both. The latter has been pointed out by all but his most fervent apologists. The former has been noticed sympathetically only by Constance Rourke: "At the same time he remained within a sphere which . . . had been defined in popular comedy, that of the acutely self-aware. . . ." Whitman himself was, of course, quite aware of what his devout critics have chosen to ignore. "I pride myself on being a real humorist under everything else," he once remarked; and in response to someone who warned, "After all, you may end up as a comedian," responded, "I might easily end up worse." And he did, poor Walt Whitman. But this, too, he foresaw:

Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much evil, perhaps more,
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not hit, that which I hinted at. . . .

BUT out of his own image of himself, especially out of the *Ersatz* Whitman of the poetry at its worst, out of the ghost-written biographies and adulatory reviews he forged, a quadruple figure emerged that threatened to swamp the poet and the poem: the Source of

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Animal Magnetism, the Sexual Emancipator, the Democrat at Home, the Prophet of a New Cult. The "hot, little" sub-prophets of the first generation soon detached the greater Prophet, confronting lines from the *Leaves* with the Upanishads; suggesting a comparison with that other carpenter's son from Nazareth; identifying the state of ecstasy out of which Walt sang with the "Cosmic Consciousness" of Dr. Bucke—in short, turning Whitman's poem into the scriptures of yet another home-made American religion.

There is a certain vagueness in Whitman at his worst, a failure to define precisely the poetic experience which blurs out into religiosity. It cannot be denied that he wrote at times the kind of indeterminately ambitious verse that has been defined as "spilt religion"—and those for whom "spilt religion" is all that is left can hardly be blamed for finding in him their sort of saint. He does exemplify, at times, a certain pseudo-mysticism, a type of "conversion" (or "possession," one scarcely knows what to call it) elsewhere found in Rousseau; in which a second-rate mind, sentimental, obtuse, and indolent, is illuminated with inexplicable suddenness by reading a phrenologist's report or the announcement of an essay-contest in a provincial newspaper. But it is not the cosmos which inspires Rousseau or Whitman, not any Otherness, but precisely the dazzling vision of themselves. In these moments of ecstasy, what is made flesh is not God but Jean-Jacques or Walt.

The Christlike Whitman has survived least successfully in an age attracted toward the poles of orthodoxy or scepticism; and his role as Source of Radiant Health has equally faded with the continuing vulgarisation of Animal Magnetism. What Mary Baker Eddy does not sufficiently cover ("*I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their beds*"), Dale Carnegie has inherited ("*Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body and soul that . . . everyone is impressed with your personality*"). As a Sexual Emancipator, however, Whitman or an image of Whitman, has had a successful career in an age inclined to think of salvation in genital terms; but about exactly what kind of emancipation Walt prophesied there has been considerable disagreement. Some find in him a celebrator of paganism, a free heterosexual life; others have discovered in him comfort and reassurance for the homosexual, a warrant for the "normality" of the abnormal; still others consider him the celebrator of a Third Sex, the *Zwischenstufe* of the Germans. In the beginning, of course, Whitman enjoyed considerable fame merely for having dared to put in print unequivocal phallic descriptions, metaphors of the orgasm. And for breaking certain indefensible taboos, he merits our praise still.

It is, in the last instance, not the poems but an image of Whitman on which his legend as a Sexual Emancipator depends: an image he himself sponsored of the defender of the body as against the soul, a deliverer from Christianity with its antithesis of spirit and flesh. Those who conspire to preserve this Whitmanian Mask feel obliged sometimes to insist that his homosexual sensibility played a negligible part in his meaning as a prophetic figure. This is the view of Havelock Ellis, for instance, who in 1921 was asserting that "Whitman represents for the first time since Christianity swept over the world, the reintegration in a sane and wholehearted form of the instincts of the entire man." In an odd way, Ellis' formation of the doctrine of Sex as Salvation recapitulates the neo-religious interpretation of Whitman as, in Melville's phrase, "a god-like ungodly man." The God of the godless, the Father of the fatherless, the Son of the Mother, that is, of impulse and intuition and formlessness—a bearded but motherly papa for all those in revolt against the super-ego, however it be named: Church or State or paterfamilias, Culture or Europe or "literature." In light of this it is necessary that Whitman be a lover of boys only—the sentimental democrat, his arm about the bus-driver or the soldier on leave, as "innocent" as Dante at the feet of Beatrice. Sex (heterosexual) pure of sentiment; and sentiment (homoerotic) pure of sex—so American! Of all the celebrators of Walt, only Garcia Lorca has caught this aspect of him:

beautiful, old Walt Whitman, your beard full of butterflies . . .
your thighs of a virginal Apollo . . .

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you dream of being a river and sleeping like a river with that comrade who would place in your breast a tiny pain of an ignorant leopard.

And the apostle of this natural innocence, which alone redeems the industrial horror of the United States, he contrasts with the travesty of the

queers of the cities, with your tumified flesh and your sullied thought . . .
harpies, assassins of doves
slaves of women. . . .

"Sleep, Walt," the Spanish poet concludes, "and let a black boy announce to the golden whites the arrival of the reign of the ear of corn. . . ."

BUT not many Whitman enthusiasts have been content to find in the *Leaves of Grass* the Fertility God who delighted Lorca. Most of them have insisted upon a more practical, a political saviour. From the beginning, of course, there have been those who distrusted the democratic dogma based on a rather ambiguous notion of "adhesive love"; but the socialists very early began to claim him for their own, while to others he seemed linked with Mazzini and the cause of republicanism in general. In the most improbable of tributes, Swinburne, hailing Whitman as the prophet of "the great god Man, which is god," invokes his spirit for the Old World:

Send but a song overseas for us,
Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be.

In the European mind Whitman was soon blended into a single paternal image with those serenely bearded rebels, Tolstoi and Hugo; or, as the archetypal "American," he was confused variously with Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson (in post-First World War Germany, for instance, where it is said he was considered the "real" author of the Fourteen Points).

In America itself the image of Whitman as more than an American poet, as somehow the very substance of the country transmuted into verse, has long persisted. And for this the poet himself is responsible, since one of the names he liked to call his Fancy, his Mask, was "America." "*I hear America singing. . . .*" "*I celebrate myself and sing myself. . . .*" The image of "Walt Whitman" swells monstrously in the poem until it merges with the body of an imaginary continent, and the continent with the vision of democracy—with democracy "*ma femme.*" In the end, there are two wives of Whitman: himself and his country. America *ma femme* and "Walt Whitman" *ma femme.* The French is not merely accidental or comical; it gives away the whole game.

Walt Whitman's "America," as well as his "Walt," were made in France: the romantic notion, out of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, of an absolute anti-Europe, the Noble Savage as a continent. The irony of such literary ideas is that they must pretend to be non-literary, anti-literary, the expression of what is merely native and ingenuous.

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia,
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts. . . .

The unreality of Whitman's "America," that is, of the European dream of America, lies in the fact that only what it flees is actually there; the goal toward which it advances eternally recedes, an elusive horizon—an absolute West. It is never the known and experienced world, but always the imagined one over the next ridge, a world of Experience-as-Innocence, where one may undergo all and pay nothing. For this reason, Whitman the New Yorker was re-dreamed (in part by himself) as the poet of the Wild West that he had not even visited when the *Leaves* took shape.

AT HIS best, Whitman is a poet of urban life, working like Baudelaire, for instance, to make the life of industry and the city viable to the imagination. It is to the mechanised urban kitchen, we remember, that he invites Europe's weary Muse—not to the fields or the farmland:

Bluffed not a bit by drainpipe, gasometer, artificial fertilizers,
Smiling and with palpable intent to stay,
She's here install'd amid the kitchen ware.

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This is a precise and witty Whitman that the touters of Father-Walt-the-Populist-Bard conspire to ignore. Edgar Lee Masters can speak for them all. "It is not because Whitman is a better poet than Emerson that he may be called the father of American poetry. . . . It is because Whitman wrote for the American tribe and the American idea. . . . Whitman was the tribal prophet and poet. . . . Whitman had the right idea, namely that poetry, the real written word, must come out of life—not out of books or erudition. It must come out of the earth. . . . No wonder that a man as sincere as Whitman . . . had to endure the sneers and chatter of New York critics. . . ." It all seems more than a little beside the point for the poet of Manhattan: this fear of New York (critics or Wall Street bankers, it scarcely matters), provinciality as the sole virtue, "sincerity" as the sole æsthetic criterion, the resurrection of the tribe.

But even stranger than Whitman as the Populist Prophet is the image of Walt as a Socialist Saint. It was the Germans who first pretended to find behind *Leaves of Grass* the figure that Johannes Becher was to dub finally *Bruder Whitman*, Brother Whitman, Comrade Whitman—a counterfeit, to be sure, but one convincing enough to persuade the police of Central Europe that his book was dangerous enough to ban. The facts matter not at all: that Whitman despised trade-unions, that after his single interview with an avowed socialist, his only comment was, "What a beautiful young man!" The Persona he had created had taken on a life of its own.

As early as 1909, Maxim Gorky had hailed Whitman as a socialist, and despite demurrers by more critical readers he passed into the Russian mind as an ancestral figure in their revolutionary tradition, so that in 1918 a copy of a poem by Whitman was distributed in translation among the Soviet troops fighting the American Expeditionary Force; and a translation of *Leaves of Grass* was later officially sponsored by the Bolshevik government. This redefined Whitman was oddly enough reimported into America to become the patron saint of "proletarian poetry" in the thirties.

In recent years, the Socialists have had to share this Whitman, to whom they have stubbornly clung, only with certain more conventional teachers of American literature and an occasional homespun versifier from the hills. But just before and after the First World War, they competed for his *mana* with everyone who considered himself in any sense *avant-garde*. *Poetry*, the magazine founded in those times by Harriet Monroe, still carries a tag from Whitman—as if to remind us that T. S. Eliot, Pound, Whitman, Amy Lowell, imagism, free verse, Sandburg, E. A. Robinson, and Frost were then indiscriminately honoured by the advocates of "newness" as all anti-cliché, anti-conventional, anti-bourgeois. Then, and for a long time afterwards, the "little magazines" sponsored equally new directions in social organisation and experimental verse. To this blurred enthusiasm, the Whitman Image corresponded exactly. He is the presiding genius of a united front that agreed only on its enemy, the middle class—and that cried without definition: "Make it new!"

But quite soon the socialist was regarding the Catholic convert with hostility; the rediscoverer of classical form watching warily the chanter of dithyrambs; the advocate of escape from emotion wondering how he had ever come to march in the same ranks as the exponents of phallic consciousness. Among the earliest attempts at dissociation were the statements of the vers librists, eager to disengage themselves from the tradition of Whitman. Amy Lowell foreshadows what Eliot is later to state more clearly: "Often and often I read in the daily, weekly, and monthly press, that modern vers libre writers derive their form from Walt Whitman. As a matter of fact, most of them got it from the French symbolist poets. . . ." She goes on to put Walt's Socialist kidnappers in their places: "the last ignominy to him would be the usage of his words to tear down the governmental structure which he loved." And she has concluded with a most Bostonian snub, remarking that "it is perhaps sadly significant that the three modern poets who most loudly acknowledge his leadership are all of recent foreign extraction."

It is the beginning of an attack that does not

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end until Whitman is transformed from a figure symbolising the main direction of the new poetry into a half-comic image of the personified wrong direction—the False Modern, formless and bathetic. Pound's offer of a negotiated peace found few supporters even among his closest followers:

> *I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman—*
> *I have detested you long enough.*
> *I come to you as a grown child*
> *Who has had a pig-headed father;*
> *I am old enough to make friends . . .*

A whole new generation, including in its ranks some of the best poets writing in English, turned against Whitman, not against the poet perhaps, but against the Mask; for they were after new ancestors, a tradition of the traditional, not the traditionless. Though the chief "Whitman scholars" in America have constructed a legend of the gradual growth of his fame against the resistance of the conservative and timid, the essential fact of Whitman's fate as a writer, in the United States at least, has been his rejection by our subtlest critics and best poets.

THE final downfall of Whitman as a muse of the New was precipitated by an attempt to celebrate that image in Hart Crane's evocation of the poet in the Cape Hatteras section of *The Bridge*.

> Panis Angelicus! *Eyes tranquil with the blaze*
> *Of love's own diametric gaze, of love's amaze . . .*
> *Our Meistersinger, thou set breath in steel;*
> *And it was thou who on the boldest heel*
> *Stood up and flung the span on even wing*
> *Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!*
> . . . . . .
> *My hand*
> *in yours,*
> *Walt Whitman—*
> *so—*

This is far from Crane at his best; and the attack on the failures of his long poem as a whole centered on this passage and the image behind it. The *locus classicus* is a review by Yvor Winters in *Poetry* for June 1930, which asserts that *The Bridge* at its best "carries the epic quality of the Whitmanian vision (the vision of humanity *en masse* or undifferentiated) to the greatest dignity and power of which it is, probably, capable. . . ." This is not, of course, praise, for Winters concludes that Crane seems to have proved "the impossibility of getting anywhere with the Whitmanian inspiration. No writer of comparable ability has struggled with it before, and, with Mr. Crane's wreckage in view, it seems highly unlikely that any writer of comparable genius will struggle with it again."

Doubtless one of the troubles with "Cape Hatteras" is the falsification by Crane (probably even to himself) of his real relation to the image of Whitman; the homosexual sensibility they shared is ignored in favour of Whitman's representativeness as an American. Besides, Crane was disturbed by doubts, unconfessed in the poem, about Whitman's worth as a poet. "You've heard me roar at too many of his lines," he wrote to Allen Tate, "to doubt that I can spot his worst, I'm sure. . . ." And the final effect of the apostrophe to "our Meistersinger" is of something that Crane does not quite believe but has to work up.

At any rate, the signal has been given for an onslaught on Whitman as a poetic example; and, taken up by Tate, R. P. Blackmur, and others, it has become an article of recent critical dogma. In Blackmur, a typical pairing off begins. "Baudelaire aimed at control, Whitman at release. It is for these reasons that the influence of Whitman was an impediment to the *practice* (to be distinguished from the reading) of poetry. . . ." What is by now the orthodox view has been stated clearly enough in William Van O'Connor's *Sense and Sensibility in American Poetry*: "Whitman and his followers . . . are not in the line of American writers who have deepened our knowledge of human motivation or action. They are, in so far as they are followers of Whitman, away from the tradition which runs from Hawthorne and Melville through James and Eliot."

TO THE extent that various Whitmanian poets, as well as Whitman himself, have exploited what Mr. O'Connor calls "the historico-mythic equivalent of America," that

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is, a prefabricated theme which makes an undefined essence the touchstone of everything else, they deserve the fashionable snub in favour of our more metaphysical writers; but to the extent that any of them manages to make poetry, and this Whitman does more frequently than it is ever possible to remember, the criticism is irrelevant. Whitman is not merely his legend as it persists in a vulgarised populist line of descent.

But there is no point in condescending to those who have failed to distinguish Whitman from his various Masks, for it is the furtive old hen himself who fights with the forces of confusion. The anonymous poet behind the created "Walt" succeeded in becoming finally not merely nameless, but almost invisible; and if we are able to distinguish now between what *Leaves of Grass* is and what it says it is—this is thanks in large part to the patient malice of anti-Whitmanians who, thinking they were documenting an exposure, destroyed not the poet but the legend which obscured him. Discovering among Whitman's papers the cardboard butterfly with which he faked the famous portrait; learning that the pure, American family of which he boasted was ridden with madness and disease; finding proof that the New Orleans love affair, the vaunted six bastards, were deliberate hoaxes—his debunkers were ready to write Walt off as "insincere," a *poseur*, not really a "lusty breeder," a democrat, or even a "real American." But those of us who suspect that poetry is precisely a matter of cardboard butterflies on real fingers, that the wit and tension of a work of art depend on the distance between the given and the imagined, are grateful to these critics for having rescued Whitman from "life" (i.e. the clichés of politics and pseudo-mysticism) and having restored him to art.

It is not enough to say with G. W. Stonier that "his duplicity staggers. He was a fine poet and a charlatan," because this implies, I think, that his fine poetry is based upon something other than his charlatanism. His trickery is, however, essential to his poems. Like all Mannerists, like Shakespeare who is the greatest among them, he is a player with illusion, and his poetry is a continual shimmering on the surface of concealment and revelation that is pathetic and comical at once. I like to think of his duplicity as an American duplicity, that doubleness in our self-consciousness which arises from our belief that what we dream of being, rather than what circumstances compel us to be, is our essential truth. The Booster, the Pharisee, these are the caricatures of the American double man; and Whitman is both Booster and Pharisee—condemned to play the Innocent, the Noble Savage by a literary tradition which invented his country before he inhabited it.

The whole world cried to him, "Be the Bard we can only dream! Chant the freedom we have imagined as if it were real—a fact of geography and not of hope!" But he was only a man, ridden by anxiety and impotence, by desire and guilt, furtive and stubborn and half-educated. That he became the world's looked-for darling is astonishing enough; that he remained a poet behind it all is scarcely credible. Yet at last the outlived images, the absurd ideas, the rhetoric borrowed and misunderstood, fall away; and only the poetry remains and the poet, anonymous in the end as they were in the beginning.

I and this mystery here we stand.

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Letter from Mexico

Life in "San Agustin"

A LITTLE dead pine tree at the head of a Mexican pass, hung with rags by Indian travellers to appease the half-remembered pagan gods, will not only mark a watershed, it will also prepare one for a change in social attitudes. For Mexico is a land of localities, of *patrias chicas*, broken by mountains and deep valleys and sudden precipitous escarpments into hundreds of segments of cactus land and orange country and tangled orchidaceous jungle, where not merely the character of the land will change abruptly but also the look of the people and the temper of their lives.

My own impressions, like those of almost every traveller, and of almost every Mexican, are localised. They embrace roughly the tropical strip of the north-east, the highlands of Jalisco and the tangle of forests and lakes and volcanic ranges in Michoacan, the districts around Puebla and Oaxaca, and a sizeable portion of the plateau north by west of Mexico City, in the states of Queretaro and Guanajuato. It is the last area that I know best, having lived there for some months in a small city which I will call San Agustin.

By American standards, San Agustin is a place of veritable antiquity. The remains of the pre-Spanish Chichimec and Otomi cultures are found occasionally beside its trickle of a river, and in the mid-16th century it was settled by the Spaniards, who built their *haciendas* on the hills around it and endowed the new city with as impressive a collection of churrigueresque and neo-classical churches and convents and palaces in glowing rose-coloured stone as one is likely to find anywhere in Mexico. Generally speaking, San Agustin has changed less since the Spanish days than most towns in the northern half of Mexico. The donkey is still the chief form of transport in its uneven cobbled streets, and the shops are still gloomy caverns within the thick walls of its buildings. The San Agustinians are socially conservative and devoutly Catholic; their fiestas are numerous and enthusiastically performed, and the priests who walk the streets of the city in seedy black mufti (since the Roman collar and the cassock are still forbidden in Mexico) are treated with obvious reverence and wield a genuine influence. Economically, San Agustin and the surrounding agricultural district are relatively retarded, and the majority of its people do not enjoy many of the comforts of modern living.

Here one encounters none of the cosmopolitan sophistication of Mexico City or the industrial progress symbolised in the bright new factories of Monterrey, towering incongruously over the waste lots where workers live squalidly in bivouacs of flattened petrol cans. San Agustin, with its narrower margins between wealth and poverty, and its slower advance towards a mechanised culture, is far more typical of Mexico than such modernised communities; it is also more typical than the really primitive Indianism of parts of the extreme south. If one wished to establish a mean of Mexican existence, San Agustin would not be far away.

IT is a place of about twelve thousand inhabitants, which spills down out of the arid hills into a wide valley that is green in the rainy months and takes on a surprising variety of grey and ochre and bistre colourings during the dry winter. Eroded ranges surround it on every side, and even the valley floor is scarred by gulches that the torrential rains of the summers have cut. The country has long been stripped of its original forests by a succession of charcoal burners that stretches far into the Indian past, and now the geometric shapes and mineral

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greens of agave and prickly pear and organ cactus dominate its hillsides, varied by the squat and thorny *mesquite*, a kind of acacia which provides much of the wood and charcoal which the Indians bring down into the town each day on their pack donkeys. Like its forests, the land's fertility has long been wasted by over-cultivation, and, though the mirrors of irrigation pools flash out here and there when one looks down from one of the surrounding heights, the farming is meagre and the area is over-populated, so that the peasants of the villages around San Agustin are poor not only in money, which is frequent in a subsistence country like Mexico, but also in goods.

These *campesinos*, whose work forms the basis of San Agustin's existence, are Indians or near-Indian *meztizos*, slim people with dark and delicate features, who often have a surprisingly Indonesian look, though occasionally the Gothic blood of northern Spain will emerge in bright blue eyes shining out of a plum-brown face. In their way of living they are still not far away from the pre-Cortesian level. Their houses are built of *adobe* bricks, and vary from the flat-roofed, box-like dwellings of the slightly better-off, to the low, horseshoe-shaped wall, crowned with a kind of conical hat of corn-stalks supported by a roof-tree of branches, that forms a house for the very poor.

The living equipment of these more destitute peasants is meagre indeed—some primitive tools, a few earthenware pots which serve for cooking, eating, and water-bearing, a neolithic *metate* for grinding corn by hand, and straw or reed mats as a bed.

One of the tests used by Mexican census takers for defining the social classes is that of footwear—do you wear shoes or sandals, or go barefooted? According to this criterion the people around San Agustin fall into a relatively low category. Few of them possess shoes, and there are many who cannot even afford the traditional *huaraches*, sandals made of leather thongs and nowadays soled with chunks of old rubber tyres. At the same time, the process of accumulation has gone so far that many of the men who wear *huaraches* and straw sombreros will also possess blue denim trousers instead of the pyjama suits of embroidered white cotton which the poor and the old-fashioned wear with a great deal of grace. The clothing of the peasants demonstrates very clearly the sexual differentiations of rural Mexico, for it is usually the women who have to go barefooted and who shiver in their shawls of soot-coloured cotton, while their menfolk are protected from the cold night air by woollen *serapes*.

Many of the *campesinos* are landless men who may own their own huts and tiny patches of land which they work with the hoe, but who earn their three pesos (half-a-crown) a day working for some more prosperous farmer. There are few large *haciendas* left, but many small farms, and a considerable number of land-workers belong to *ejidos*, or semi-communal holdings worked according to the traditional Indian manner. Agricultural mechanisation is almost non-existent. Only the *haciendados* are likely to own tractors, and most of the fields are worked by home-made wooden ploughs drawn by oxen or mules. Many farmers grow little more than is needed for bare subsistence, and their diet is scanty and monotonous—tortillas of corn meal, beans, chickpeas, peppers, perhaps a few tomatoes and onions and, when they are lucky, a little meat or goat's milk cheese. The *maguey*, whose vitriol blue cockades border the roadsides and the edges of the fields, completes the pattern of subsistence by the juice that produces the milky and malodorous native beer known as *pulque*.

Sunday is the pivotal day in the monotonous rural week. Then the peasants stream into market in San Agustin, the men in their best *serapes*, the women with narrow-brimmed straw hats perched squarely on top of their shawl-covered heads. Those who have much produce to sell bring it in straggling processions of loaded donkeys; those who have little carry it in packs supported by headbands or, if they can scrape together the necessary centavos, travel on the wooden benches of one of the third-class village buses. These rackety and windowless boxes on wheels usually bear names like The Dove or The Phantom * and carry on their windshields gaudy little shrines with coloured prints of the Virgin of Guadalupe or her sister of Zapopan, for, though Mexicans are probably the most skilfully reckless drivers in the world, they always prefer to

* The nomenclature of Mexican shops and vehicles deserves a study in itself. One of the *cantinas* in the San Agustin district is called Hell (*El Infierno*) and another, a very rough one, has the ironical name of The English Parliament. I have also seen a butcher's shop called The Vampire.

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have at least a supernatural insurance against the risks they constantly take on the winding dirt roads of their native hills. The bus, incidentally, is probably the most popular machine in Mexico, for the average Indian is a great traveller, always on his way to markets or fiestas, or going on pilgrimage to whatever miraculous shrine may offer its promise of penitential rigours.

In San Agustin the more prosperous peasant will seek to sell his corn or beans to a dealer or the little bank in the market place where, at the same counter, you can buy chickpeas or eggs, or cash your traveller's cheques. Those peasants who have only a little produce will settle them on the steps of the market hall or on the cobblestones outside and spread out their piles of crimson chilis or washed pearly onions, or deep purple prickly pears or yellow guavas, whose odour can be smelt half-way across the street. Some sell a kind of ivory-coloured flat turnip which is sprinkled with red pepper and eaten raw by the customer as he walks through the market, and others patiently arrange nuts or egg tomatoes in geometrical piles, for only the regular stall holders can afford scales and most of the peasants sell by the handful or the pile of four or five fruit. Some of these petty traders have so little for sale that one wonders how the few centavos they may gain from their handful of beans or their little pile of kindling can be worth the time and patience they consume.

Many of the people whom the countryman meets on his market day in San Agustin are little different from himself, for a large proportion of those who inhabit the *adobe* hovels on the outskirts of the city are also farm workers. In Mexico only the *haciendado* who can turn his home into a fortress lives on his own land. The small farmer and the labourer live in the nearest settlement, where they will have company and at least some protection in a land where social disturbance is endemic and life at best is insecure. In the peripheral parts of San Agustin you will also meet the manual workers of the city, and their standard of living is little higher than that of the peasants. A labourer makes about 3½ pesos (three shillings) a day, and a skilled mason (who is usually a good craftsman and a bit of an architect) will earn perhaps 7 pesos (six shillings) a day. Food is cheaper in Mexico than in Britain or the United States, but there has been a steady inflation of prices, manufactured and imported goods are dear, and most manual workers live at the sandal-wearing level, with little beyond the barest necessities.

Mechanisation has affected San Agustin far more than the villages, and cheap factory-made textiles have mostly replaced the hand-woven cotton fabric which was a speciality of the city. But the very cheapness of labour, which is partly a by-product of land hunger and the surplus of rural population, has given the more primitive ways of working an amazing tenacity. To quote one not very extreme example, it is cheaper for the municipality of San Agustin to employ a man to cut the grass by hand rather than buy a lawn-mower; he does not use a scythe, or even a reaping hook, but a little disc cut from the top of a tin can, which he sharpens on an ordinary pebble. That makeshift grass-cutter has always seemed to me a symbol of the way in which poverty has nurtured a kind of frugal resourcefulness among the Mexicans. They have nothing resembling the production for waste which is a feature of the American economy. It is true that in other, unthinking ways an enormous amount of waste does go on—as in soil exhaustion and burning trees to clear land in the tropical regions. But once an article has been produced it is never discarded while the smallest amount of use is left in it.

The low price set on labour has enabled many traditional arts to survive. For instance, most of the pottery in San Agustin is still made by local craftsmen, who use a primitive wheel-less method of rolling out the clay like pastry and shaping it over a rounded block of wood. Designs are roughly painted on, and a bowl made in this way will sell for twopence. But these crafts survive only because people are poor. Most Mexicans prefer the smooth finish of machine-made articles, and as soon as they can afford the relatively expensive mass-produced china, they take to it as gladly as they will abandon a handsome *serape* for a city suit.

Nobody, in fact, is more contemptuous of the Indian way of living than the *meztizo* who has gained a modicum of sophistication, and many San Agustinians are of this type.

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The city is rather like an onion in its formation. The slums of the poor lie on the outskirts. Closer in are the streets of the small traders, superior craftsmen, government clerks and other eaters of wheat bread and wearers of shoes. Behind their plain stucco walls and barred windows, these streets often look dull and gloomy, but almost any open door will lead you into a tiled patio filled with poinsettias and fleshy cannas, with purple and rust-red bougainvilleas (or *bugambilias* as the Mexicans call them with their inveterate tendency to naturalise foreign words) clambering up to the roofs; tame parrots and doves will fly freely in and out of the creepers and perch on the great leaves of the elephant's ear plants, for all Mexicans are great animal lovers and have a talent for taming both mammals and birds.

Right at the heart of the onion, in the palaces of the old Spanish aristocrats around the Plaza, in the modernised houses behind the pinnacles of the parish church, live the people who constitute San Agustin's upper crust—the remnants of the genuine *creole* aristocracy, the professional men and higher officials and merchants, the retired rich from Mexico City, a few native writers and painters, and a fairly large foreign colony.

The foreign colony is fairly representative of expatriate groups in Mexico. Most of its members are Americans and Canadians—second-rate painters, radio writers in search of the great novel that haunts every American broadcasting studio, science fictionists, divorcees living on alimony, and honest-to-God drunks who are attracted by the Bacardi at six shillings a bottle. There are also the lost Germans who figure in every travel book on Latin America, nursing the memories of active pasts and yearning constantly for the homeland they left thirty or forty years ago, yet so rooted in Mexican life that it is not possible for them to depart. Our landlord was one of these; he claimed to have been a spy in the First World War, and never tired of telling how, disguised as a Belgian officer, he had been present at the execution of his distinguished colleague, Mata Hari. Finally, the foreign colony is completed by the Spanish refugees from the civil war, by a few representatives of the smaller European nationalities, and by the usual brace of English remittance men.

These expatriates have in fact little effect on the lives of the Mexicans, who have grown used to the oddities of their guests, but rarely try to imitate them, except at fiestas, where one will sometimes see among the feathered *couchero* dancers a strange figure in a white mask who imitates the gestures and actions of some particularly obtrusive American. Where the influence of the United States does penetrate, it is largely through those quasi-celestial beings whose life in the palaces of New York and the open ranges of Nevada is displayed to the local population every day in the old rococo theatre. The people of San Agustin are inveterate film-goers; the movie projector runs the bus close as the Mexican's favourite mechanical contrivance, and all classes in the town unite to view the Grade B works of Hollywood.

THE few Mexican films I saw—these were not the best, but they were fairly typical—revealed some interesting characteristics which bring us back to the problem of class stratification in towns like San Agustin. The locale of these films was always Mexico City, their actors were almost invariably creoles (of pure Spanish blood) or near-creoles, and the acting was overdone in tornados of simulated passion and excitement—qualities which are lacking in ordinary Mexican life but which are valued as signs of Latin temperament as opposed to the impassive stolidity of the Indian.

The attitude reflected in these films is typical of the upper and middle classes, not only in old and conservative cities like San Agustin, but also in the more modern towns. It is frequently emphasised by propagandists that Mexico is one country, that there are only Mexicans. In fact the classes within the country are defined by race and wealth alike. It is true that Indians or near-Indians like Juarez, Diaz, and Cardenas have all sat in the Presidential chair, but politics in Mexico is largely a world apart from the currents of social life, and a white skin and European manners are still the best passports to polite circles. The *creole* and *meztizo* upper crust of San Agustin will blandly disclaim any knowledge of Indian ways. Their rules of behaviour are rigid in the Spanish manner, the freedom of their women is still sharply restricted, and an invisible status line determines who shall be allowed to play cards at the local social club. Such people are often wealthy only in a relative sense, for a schoolteacher may earn no more than £4 a week,

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while many public officials have to hold down two jobs in order to live. Yet there is still an enormous gap that separates them from the poor Indians who act as their servants.

In education, again, it is the more prosperous who have all the advantages. Schooling is theoretically compulsory in San Agustin, as it is in all Mexico, but there is not even enough accommodation for all the children in the town, and those who do not possess shoes or unpatched clothes are not encouraged to attend classes. Besides, although Mexico's complicated labour laws undoubtedly have excellent clauses regarding the employment of children, they are negated not only by the negligence and venality of some local officials, but also by the sheer facts of existence among the poor, whose children have to work early because a man cannot keep a large family on half-a-crown a day. The inevitable consequence is a stubbornly high proportion of illiteracy even among the young.

Yet there are three things at least which all San Agustinians have in common—their love of music, their love of festivals, and their problems about water. The musicians of this area are mostly *mariachis*. Their music originated in Guadalajara at a time when there were many French in that city; small bands of instrumentalists and singers would play at weddings, and the name of *mariachi* which such groups have retained is a Mexican corruption of the French word *mariage*. No festivity, either public or private, is complete in San Agustin without its *mariachis*. A typical group will have a couple of guitars, a kind of heavy-bellied mandolin and a fiddle, and one or more of the players will sing the sad and haunting songs that are admired on the plateau. Melancholy is their speciality, and they can give a sombre touch to the merriest tune. Their music is more Spanish than Indian, and its austerity is untempered by the Afro-Cuban rhythms of Vera Cruz and the south. Some of the best *mariachi* groups are poor Indians in sombreros and sandals, but there are equally good singers among the middle-class *meztizos*, while music is by no means always made in this organised way. Often, in the evening, one will pass some cavernous, ill-lit shop or *cantina* where a musician has started to play and a group of customers joins in the singing.

San Agustin is celebrated in Mexico for its fiestas. Not only is it one of the few towns where the traditional Christmas processions still take place, but each of its many churches has, besides the regular feasts for such times as the Day of the Dead and Corpus Christi, its own special festival which the parishioners strive to make as good as those of the rival congregations. The churches of San Agustin are divided almost equally between the elaborate structures with enormous gilded retables, which are attended by all classes, and the specifically Indian churches, smaller, decrepit, meagrely furnished with few or no benches, but usually containing impressive primitive carvings of the agonies of Christ which reflect the Mexican preoccupation with mortality. The Indians will often make up for the poverty of their churches with floral decorations, and I remember with particular vividness going into one of these bare buildings in November and seeing the whole chancel packed with great flowering branches of peach, which in San Agustin had just begun to blossom at that time.

In the fiestas of the larger churches, all classes cooperate. Wealthy people march as penitents in the processions, their children take part in the festivities, and, while the *meztizo* band pompously plays *Poet and Peasant* from a stand high above the crowd, the Indian dancers re-enact on the cobbles the battles of the Aztecs and the Conquistadores, and the Indian band, which plays without a conductor and with little regard for time or tune, takes its turn in the music to blaze out some barbaric melody which, after a great deal of mystification, one realises is a Viennese waltz handed down—and thoroughly Indianised in the process—from the days of Maximilian.

The fiestas in the humbler parishes, which are conducted by the Indians themselves, are singularly unexcited affairs, for the Mexican peon has a monumental reserve beside which the Englishman becomes an idle chatterer and the Chinese a loquacious babbler. There is all the noise in the world at one of these poor people's feasts. The band blasts away continually, the fireworks bang, the *mariachis* wail and sob, the dancers strum their guitars and shake their rattles, and the tuneless church bells clang out their cracked peals. But the crowd, while it thoroughly enjoys all the activity, remains impassive. A few children scuffle, *tequila* suddenly goes to the head of a drunkard and he is led off by a pair of Indian policemen

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before he can knife anybody, and the rest quietly watch and munch their tortillas.

The problem of water, as I have said, is the third important thing which all San Agustinians have in common. For, like most of Mexico, the city has neither an adequate nor a pure water supply. Even in the centre there are many streets which have only one tap for all the inhabitants, and the women do their washing bent over a little gutter of running water into which the men also urinate and which becomes a mere stream of sewage by the time it reaches the river. But, scanty or not, the water is always dangerous, and transmits its threat of enteritis and dysentery to all classes. Polluted water is the cause of half the sickness in Mexico, and particularly of the vast infant mortality which is symbolised by the piles of tiny white coffins that stand ready-made in the doorways of the undertakers' shops. Even the wealthier people of San Agustin are not immune from the sickness which they euphemistically call *turistas*, since the greatest precautions cannot eliminate every possibility of infection. The Indians have almost no idea of preventive hygiene, and, while they are personally clean, they very rarely take any precautions to ensure the cleanliness of what they eat or drink. This heedlessness is partly fatalistic, for Mexicans have an exaggerated consciousness of the ambient inevitability of death, but it also has its roots in ignorance and in a poverty which can better afford the few centavos asked by the wise woman for her traditional herbal remedies than the pesos which are needed for modern medical attention. The middle-class Mexican, on the other hand, seems to make a fetish of drugs, if one can judge from the large number of pharmacies even in small towns like San Agustin.

THE region in which San Agustin is situated is a *patria chica* of which its inhabitants are not unjustly proud, for it was less than twenty miles away that Manuel Hidalgo raised the banner of La Virgen de Guadalupe and started the struggle for Mexican liberation; the ancestors of the San Agustinians, Indians and creoles alike, were among the first to join Hidalgo's tragic march towards the capital. Yet the people of this city do not seem to be so conscious of Mexico as a whole as their historic record might lead one to expect. Few even of the middle class have travelled much further than Mexico City, and their knowledge of the rest of the country is probably less than that of a really perceptive tourist. It is rare indeed to meet a Mexican from this region who has penetrated into the jungles of Yucatan, or even as far south as Oaxaca. As for the ordinary Indian, both Yucatan and Oaxaca seem a great deal more distant to him than those United States which constitute the same kind of paradise to Mexican landworkers as they did to Italian peasants in a preceding generation. Mexican nationalism is still largely a question of local patriotisms, and, except perhaps in the capital, it is only among relatively small strata of intellectuals and politicians that the concept of the country as a whole has real meaning.

This is one of the many reasons for the loose connection between real life and politics in Mexico. It is a country of many laws and grandiose social schemes. Paradoxically, it is also a country of much freedom and of slow progress away from a subsistence economy. The laws are only sporadically observed, and the plans are usually far too ambitious for the initial enthusiasm which they inspired to last very long. The thread of political activity in Mexican life is frail and often broken, and the fact that human life has been tolerable, and often highly enjoyable, even in the worst times of disruption, has been mostly due to the stubborn survival of a complex of customs and strictly social bonds that have kept the community together under violent stress. The strongest of all these bonds is probably *compadrazgo*, the institution of godfatherhood, which extends the family by incorporating into it those people who are linked by affinity or interest rather than blood. The relationship between a *compadre* and his godson, or between the *compadre* and the real father, is considered equal to a blood relationship, and therefore provides an enormous cohesive force. In a land where social security schemes even now exist only on the most rudimentary level, it creates a kind of mutual aid structure which often sustains the unfortunate. Even politics find *compadrazgo* an ally to be courted, and the local *jefe politico* will seek to cement his position by becoming the godfather of hundreds of local children and thus enlisting a great mass of families on his side. Naturally, since both parts of the bargain have to be observed, this is a great cause of the patronage which to foreigners is a shocking aspect of Mexican politics, but

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which the majority of Mexicans regard as completely natural.

Though there are small but growing movements on both the left and the right, Mexico is still virtually a one-party country, dominated by the Party of Revolutionary Institutions. In the European sense, this is hardly either a party or revolutionary. It is rather a kind of grab-all collection of varied organisations, embracing within its ranks labour and peasant unions, professional societies and associations of public functionaries. More and more, since the days of Cardenas, it has tended towards a middle-of-the road liberalism, while always paying homage to the revolutionaries of the past, and there is no doubt that its leaders have recently made a great effort to find a formula by which the politician and the churchman, the new Mexican capitalist and the unionist, the peasant and the townsman, can work together; inevitably, the attempt to achieve so many compromises results in a vague policy and a relatively low level of achievement. Yet there is change, and it is significant that in the past decade the military *caudillo* has disappeared from the political scene, and his place has been taken by the civilian leader with administrative experience.

For the people of San Agustin, though they are Catholic in religion and conservative in social outlook, the Party of Revolutionary Institutions is still the movement which gains most of the votes, in spite of the fact that the right-wing minority groups have a greater hold in this area than elsewhere in Mexico (Leon, the centre of Sinarquism, is only just over the mountains). But this fact implies a good deal less of a sense of national solidarity than one would imagine, since the very nature of the governing party allows it to make an appeal on many sectional levels. Some people, as I have indicated, voted for it merely in loyalty to *compadres* who were in politics. The peasants voted for it because they have no other immediate hope of gaining land and irrigation, the workers because they expected higher wage minimums, and the middle class either because their business interests made it imperative to keep in with the local chiefs, or because they or their relatives held or hoped to hold some of the many jobs and sinecures in the government bureaucracy.

Perhaps it is among the few intellectuals of San Agustin that one finds the greatest tendency towards a national and also an international consciousness. At the same time, the young artists and writers to whom I talked seemed to be swinging away from the folksiness and obvious propagandism of the Twenties. Of the great Mexican trio, Rivera and Siquieros are notably less popular than formerly, and only Orozco has held his position in the respect of the young, while less political and less blatantly national artists like Tamayo have gained an enormous enhancement of prestige. Some of the younger painters are working back towards a style that will bring Mexican themes into a closer relationship with European movements and with the Spanish as well as the Indian past. But for the writer and the artist, whether they live in San Agustin or in Mexico City, the problems are economic as well as artistic. The painter cannot command anything like the price he might gain if he sold his pictures in New York or even in Dallas, while, in a country where only a tiny minority receive secondary education, the writer's income from periodicals and books is often extremely meagre. Many writers are forced into film work or political propaganda, and the strains upon integrity are often great. That they are so frequently resisted is greatly to the credit of the Mexican literary and artistic worlds as a whole.

I have treated San Agustin as a microcosm of Mexico, and, since that microcosm included neither the primitive life of the highlands of Chiapas or the Tabasco jungle nor the polished modernism of the Paseo de la Reforma, it is certainly not comprehensive. Yet all the essential elements of Mexican life are there, all the paradoxes of habitual gentleness breaking out under stress into unthinking violence, of an essential cohesion within a sharply divided society, of a steady progress towards improved living which builds up gradually beneath what at first sight might seem a hopeless stagnation. Like most other Mexicans, the San Agustinian goes about life with a mixture of impulse and inertia that is appalling to Americans and puzzling to Europeans, yet in the crystal light of his brilliant landscape he manages to live with a poise and a satisfaction that have attracted many a grumbling foreigner against his will and held him long among the white houses on the barren hills.

George Woodcock

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Films

"Potemkin" as an Epic

A SOVIET film about a mutiny on a Czarist warship is almost certain to have a political bias, but *The Battleship Potemkin* could never be simply dismissed as propaganda. There is a strong ideological flavour, and it is plain (even without knowing the true history of the mutiny) that the film has "adapted" the truth. But the adaptation seems innocent of a desire to indoctrinate. There are flaws in its story—obvious contradictions, a lame ending, a feeling that the tale is only half-told—that a competent propagandist would surely have avoided. And in spite of these faults, and in spite of the film's immature technique, there is an elevation of spirit that rises above the want of drama and transcends the political bias.

It is almost an "epic" spirit, and the film is not unlike a primitive epic poem; in Homer's *Iliad*, for instance, there is this same combination of majesty, crudeness of treatment, and ideology. The key to the similarity seems to lie in this sense of incompleteness, this feeling that the story is only half-told. For it is as if the tale the film tells is one with which the audience is expected to be already familiar; as if, over the twenty years before the film was made, the story of the *Potemkin* had already become a popular legend.

THE film was made in 1925; it is a silent film, without dialogue, but with captions to provide a commentary. The actual mutiny occurred during the Social Democratic revolutionary movement of 1905–1907. It was an isolated incident, however, relatively non-political in origin, and not directly connected with the movement.

The *Prince Potemkin Tavritchesky* was the largest capital ship of the Black Sea Fleet. The mutiny broke out while she was at sea on manœuvres, escorted by the torpedo boat No. 267. It arose from some putrefying meat, used to make soup for the sailors' midday meal. The complaints of the crew reached the Captain, and they were paraded on the foredeck in the early afternoon. During this parade, aggrieved by their vile conditions of service and provoked by their treatment from their superiors, the crew revolted, seized arms from the guardroom, and murdered the Captain and the senior officers. The torpedo boat followed their example. The ringleaders were two sailors, Vakulintchuk and Matushenko: Vakulintchuk was shot in the first fighting and died the same afternoon; Matushenko set up a committee of the mutineers, and the battleship and her escort turned for Odessa, where (as they had heard) a strike among the factory workers had developed into an insurrection.

The *Potemkin* dropped anchor off Odessa that evening, and the body of Vakulintchuk was landed in the dark and laid under a tent on the mole, where next morning it attracted an enthusiastic crowd. She anchored there for three days, and received visits from delegates of the local revolutionary organisation. But the mutineers seemed to have no further plans beyond recoaling and taking in a supply of fresh provisions; they were reluctant to leave their fortress to join forces with the strikers on shore; and other than this there was little assistance they could render. In the circumstances the battleship's heavy armament was useless, for they could not bombard the town or engage with the Fleet without killing their own comrades. On the second evening, indeed, two salvoes were fired as a gesture at the military headquarters in Odessa. But, except for

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this, the *Potemkin* remained during her ten days' liberty in a state of helpless rebellion.

On the third day the rest of the squadron arrived from Sevastopol under the command of the Admiral, and the battleship and her torpedo boat stood out to sea. Neither side, however, seemed willing to be the first to open fire, and there followed a bloodless engagement in which the *Potemkin* passed twice through the line of ships without a shot being exchanged. While this was going on there were some demonstrations among the lower decks of the squadron, and the crew of one ship, the *George The Victorious*, put their officers under restraint and went over to the mutineers. The Admiral, fearful of further infection, gave the order to disengage. The *Potemkin* and the *George* returned to port, and the squadron disappeared over the horizon.

The film ends on this indecisive encounter with the squadron. What in fact followed was that next day the *George* regretted her defection, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape under the guns of the *Potemkin*, went in alongside the mole. With the harbour occupied by a hostile vessel, Matushenko and the mutineers lost their heads and resolved on flight. The *Potemkin* sailed out of Odessa that evening. For the next few days she cruised up and down the Black Sea, gradually running short of coal; and finally, with her bunkers empty, surrendered on the Rumanian coast. The mutiny was over. Three years later the tide of revolution had receded. Between 1907 and 1917 there was a break in the continuity of the revolutionary movement, and at the time it appeared to be final. One of the delegates from Odessa who visited the battleship, writing an account of the mutiny shortly after, speaks then of the "Russian Revolution" as something which—so far as it went—had already run its course.

THE story is not promising material for propaganda: an isolated revolt, ending ingloriously, and wholly unconnected with the victory of the Revolution in 1917. But at the time the mutiny must have stirred the Social Democrats. Stories will have been told about it. Assume that the legend grows. What the bearers of the legend will wish to do is to place the mutiny somewhere in their glorious past; and the legend will try to establish a connection between the mutiny and the Revolution, and to draw the attention away from the larger historical view—and the failure of the mutiny—towards particular aspects of it that caught the imagination at the time.

This is exactly what is done in the film. The elements of the true story are there: the two leaders, Vakulintchuk and Matushenko; the putrid meat; the ship's surgeon staring at the maggots and pronouncing the meat wholesome; the parade and the fighting on the foredeck; Odessa; the curious encounter with the squadron. But the emphasis has been altered; the mutiny becomes part of the Revolution; a spiritual connection is established. It is no longer a spontaneous outbreak. We see the two leaders laying their plans in advance, preparing to act in concert with the strikers of Odessa. Matushenko, who led the revolt after his comrade's death, never appears after the first scene: for it was he who later led the flight to Rumania and betrayed the mutiny. But Vakulintchuk is made a martyr. Long scenes are devoted to the repose of his body on the mole, with the epitaph pinned to his breast—"*For a spoonful of soup*"; the loafers at dawn peering into the tent that covers the bier; the word passed from mouth to mouth, the weeping women, the rising fury; the whole town pouring down to the harbour; and we see in dumbshow the interminable stirring speeches over his corpse that are so familiar from epic poetry. In this way the attention is diverted from the historical setting, and from what happened to the mutiny afterwards. Moreover, the story is left unfinished. The *Potemkin* steams out to meet the squadron, and there is a silence as she draws near; then a burst of cheering as she begins to pass through the line, and on all the ships the sailors crowd the decks and fling their caps across the water to the glory of the victorious Revolution. And there the film stops. The last picture is of the battleship ploughing irresistibly on towards the audience; and the plain inference is that in a short while she will have ploughed over the last shattered fragments of the Czarist régime. The gap of twelve years to 1917 and the ebbing of the revolutionary tide in the meantime are quietly passed over.

What is striking in the film, however, is that this has not been done more thoroughly. Again and again the revision of history seems to be hampered by an inconvenient scruple for the truth. This occurs in many places where a detail of the true story remains to contradict its "revolutionary" context. It occurs more

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seriously in the confusion over the immediate cause of the mutiny. Here the film seems to be telling two stories at once. One in which it is a planned movement, initiated by the Social Democrats; and in this story the signal for mutiny is given when Vakulintchuk defiantly leads his comrades off parade, breaking their ranks to take their stand by the gun-turret. And the other in which the mutiny is a spontaneous revolt of the crew over their rations; in this, the true story, the crew break ranks in obedience to an order, and the signal for the fighting comes later; the officers decide to make an example of some of the sailors, and Vakulintchuk, in unpremeditated heroism, suddenly steps forward with a cry. The first story clearly suits the revolutionary theme; but no attempt is made to suppress the second, and both versions are given in the film in a disjointed sequence. Again at the end of the film the story is too obviously unfinished. As the *Potemkin* steams into the squadron every sign prepares us for a spectacular engagement: instead there is a silence, a burst of cheering, and caps thrown into the sea: nothing more. There is the lamest of attempts to suggest a victory, without actually saying so. And one suspects at once that the inconclusive ending conceals an inglorious sequel.

But this is understandable if the film is the product of a popular legend, a traditional story of the type found in primitive epic poetry. A legend of this type owes its growth and survival to a nostalgia—to a portrayal of a past age or society whose memory is still cherished, or some event of popular significance which for a particular reason is worth recalling. Thus the epic poetry of the Greek and Teutonic peoples each recalled a heroic age, since passed away, separated from the poet by several generations. The legend is an attempt to recapture the lost spirit of the heroic age. In this broad sense its purpose is always ideological: it may intend merely to portray heroic spirit, and not consciously to indoctrinate: but it is not directly concerned with recording history, nor merely with telling a good dramatic story. The story may have no historical significance at all. The siege of Troy left no mark on the political history of Greece; the struggle of an unidentified prehistoric people, the "Achaeans," for the control of a fortress in Asia Minor, a fortress about the size of a medieval castle, and a struggle which probably ended in defeat. But ideologically its influence—through the *Iliad*—was immense. It was the spirit of the *Iliad*, the "Homeric" spirit, which for classical Greece gave significance to the duels of the heroes round the walls of Troy.

But the legend grows slowly, and its growth depends on tradition. At first there may be a number of different versions of the story, conflicting with one another in detail, each incomplete and to some extent still fluid, which will be exposed to the editing of succeeding generations. Then at some stage a definitive version, such as the *Iliad*, comes into being: but by this time the task of its author (or editor) will be a difficult one. So far as he can he will now have to make a good story of it; but he must do justice to the spirit of the legend. Moreover, in each popular version there will be things which have acquired a sanctity of their own: some incident, some vivid detail, that strikes the imagination and suggests the whole story. That was the time (one might remember) when the ship's surgeon refused to see the maggots under his nose. Or that was the time when one of the squadron sailed over to the side of the *Potemkin*. . . . Some of these remembered incidents may be out of place in a dramatic account of the affair. Some may contradict others equally well remembered—was it really the maggots that started the mutiny, or was it the planning of Vakulintchuk? Some of them may have a deeper significance that does violence to the legend—true, the *George The Victorious* sailed over to the mutineers; but in the end her adherence led to disaster, for her treachery next day precipitated the flight that ended in surrender. . . . But each of these memories is fixed in tradition, and all must somehow find their place.

The author of the final version is thus bound by his material. It need not be complete; his audience are already familiar with the story. He may leave out parts of it which do not suit his theme. He may shift the emphasis. But he cannot invent, and he cannot falsify. Where for instance two accounts of a particular incident conflict, neither can be sacrificed; both must be incorporated bodily and somehow harmonised in the text. This happens repeatedly in Homer, in the "spurious" lines and passages which scholars used to reject as contradicting the "genuine" parts of the story. It happens in the film, in the two

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superimposed accounts of the actual mutiny. The method leads to contradictions in the final version, but tradition is satisfied either way: Vakulintchuk is both the scheming revolutionary and also the sudden hero of the moment. And the same kind of method is used in expurgating details which are harmful to the spirit of the legend. There must be the least possible tampering with the story, some incident may have an unpleasant significance, but it is already part of the tradition. And so traces remain—there is a taint on the memory of Matushenko, but tradition remembers him as one of the ringleaders, and he cannot be wholly eliminated. The memory of the *George The Victorious* is also tainted; but the story tells of one of the squadron who went over to the mutineers, and so in the film we find the *George's* place taken by the torpedo boat No. 267. (This torpedo boat in fact accompanied the battleship from the beginning; but we see her first only at the end of the film, during the encounter with the squadron; and there is an ambiguous caption—"The Destroyer 267, which went over to the insurgents, never left the battleship's side.") And then, to enhance the martyrdom of Vakulintchuk, there is a similar expurgation of the slaughter *en masse* of the ship's officers.

This adaptation of the true story is not a deliberate revision of history. It is a gradual, haphazard process, practically completed before the "final version" comes into being. It is simply that a traditional story, in the retelling, gradually gives more prominence to what best exemplifies its own theme, and innocently omits whatever tradition does not wish to remember. And it is from this process too that the legend ultimately acquires its epic quality. It took several centuries of oral repetition for the *Iliad* to grow out of the tales of the Trojan War, to become the traditional book of the young Greek peoples. With the legend of the *Potemkin* the period is much shorter. In place of a young civilisation there is a political creed still in its infancy: instead of the spirit of a lost heroic age, the young spirit of revolution which in victory has perhaps lost the ardour of its first youth. The spirit is a different one, political rather than ethical; and instead of individual heroes there is the Party and the People. But the stories still have the epic quality; they are still stories of heroes, heroes with whom there is established a definite spiritual ancestry, and whose deeds in the retelling gradually acquire the ideological significance for which the stories have come to be remembered.

If these were the sources of *The Battleship Potemkin*, it can be understood why the film has at first the appearance, but does not leave behind the flavour, of propaganda; for its makers were bound by their material, and the political bias had already been implanted in the material by the processes of tradition. These are the same processes that gave birth to the earliest European poem. And this may explain why, in spite of the flaws in the film's composition and its plainly partisan interpretation of history, it has an unconscious nobility of spirit that is only found in epic literature.

Timothy Angus Jones

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Art

Death of a Wild Animal

OBITUARISTS are notoriously nice. When a great artist dies, however, they take it upon themselves to compose a balanced assessment of his achievement. And the balance is maintained by their leaning over backwards not to overpraise.

Three French artists of high distinction died during the course of last year: Henri Laurens, André Derain, and Henri Matisse. The death of Laurens, certainly one of the half-dozen leading sculptors of our time, went virtually unnoticed in this country, but then it has to be admitted that in this respect his death closely resembled his life. The death of Derain provoked some half-hearted tributes tempered with reiterations of the old complaint that, after getting away to a good start, he fell into a fashionable decline. One wonders how it could have come about that his despised later work should have influenced such outstanding painters of a younger generation as Giacometti, Gruber, Balthus, Bérard, and Tal Coat. Derain was a man of the highest intelligence and integrity, and he knew very well what he was doing: he was trying to find an alternative to the imitation and exaggeration of Cézannesque and Gauguinesque mannerisms by reviving the great pre-impressionist tradition, trying to narrow the gap between the painter and the past. And in giving himself to this formidable enterprise of restoring the meat to painting, he often painted brilliantly, always authoritatively, sometimes badly, but never boringly.

Matisse's death, in contrast, did inspire many words of homage. Only, they gave the impression that their authors had looked long and carefully at all the artist's work except his masterpieces. It is true that most of the obituaries and tributes went to some lengths to refute the prejudice that Matisse's art is essentially frivolous, a prejudice exemplified by Professor Anthony Blunt's notions that after 1906 "Matisse, in his paintings, almost eliminates the third dimension" and that "since the Fauve period he has moved more and more towards a sort of *chic,* a style emptied of human content, painting reduced to the level of a *crétonne.*" But these refutations were almost exclusively based on an insistence that Matisse (1) worked so persistently and self-critically at perfecting his pictures that he was clearly no mere creature of instinct but a rational being, and/or (2) used colour not only for decorative but for plastic purposes, and/or (3) expressed so profound a delight in the good things of life as to make them appear more important than the bad things. All this is doubtless very true, but it still gives us a Matisse who is no more than a formalist and a hedonist. It is by no means a contemptible thing to be a formalist who is a master of form, and a hedonist who can inspire others to share his hedonism. And Matisse was certainly one of the great ravishers of the senses. Only it so happens that he was something more.

Unfortunately, however, he once made the mistake of writing: "What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter, an art which might be for every mental worker, be he businessman or writer, like an appeasing influence, like a mental soother, something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue." I say that to have written this was "unfortunate" and a "mistake," not from his point of view but from ours. Now that art has become a subject for "serious" research, those

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who profess to study it make it their practice to examine the verbal utterances of painters rather more closely than their pictures. Consequently, the pictures have come to be studied mainly to confirm what is found in the verbal utterances. It is significant that many of Matisse's obituarists in England quoted from the passage cited above. And every one of them wrote of him as if they were interpreting his æsthetic personality more in the light of this passage than in the light of his paintings. They seem to have forgotten that the passage, written in 1908, begins with the words "What I dream of . . ." and that what an artist dreams of is often less than he achieves. Ultimately Matisse did realise his dream—in many of his paintings done after 1917. And in so doing he lost what was most precious in his art. But between the time when he wrote of his dream and the time he realised it, he produced a number of paintings which are about as far from being the equivalent of "a good armchair" as are the frescoes of Masaccio.

CONSIDERED as an essay in form and colour, almost any Matisse of almost any period is a deeply serious work, however light-hearted its mood. In many or most of the works of 1908–1917, the mood itself is deeply serious.

The two great decorations completed for Shchukin in 1910, *Dance* and *Music*, convey an intuition of the animal in man which makes us feel that we are there at the dawn of human history. The group of five figures prancing around in a ring who perform the *Dance* are a variant on the group of figures in the background of the composition, finished four years earlier, called *Joie de Vivre*. But there is more than *joie de vivre* in the later group: there is a frenzied desire to be hurled by the impetus of the dance off the dull surface of the earth, there is a promise of annihilation of the self in the irresistible, consuming dance. Here is a Triumph of Dionysus.

The *Music* is a hymn to Apollo. Where the five figures in the *Dance* are absorbed in the group, the five figures in the *Music* celebrate man's solitude. Meditative, awkward, each of them floats in a sea of isolation, keeps his distance from the others, refrains from looking at the others, seems unaware of the others, is joined to the others only by his participation in the making of a music which does not appear to be coming from within them so much as to be flowing through them: the presence of Music is more potent than the presence of the piper, the fiddlers, and the singers.

Here in the Shchukin decorations are a frenzied movement and a solemn music. But most of the great paintings of 1908–17 are suffused by stillness and an uneasy silence. The first big figure-composition, the *Bathers with a Turtle* of 1908, is stark, enigmatic, ominous: the three nude figures by the bare sea-shore stare down at the turtle as if it held the secret of their destiny. This sense of wonder and foreboding recurs again and again in the works of the next decade. One of its supreme expressions is the bronze, *Two Negresses*, of 1908, so pungent in its sapphic and narcissistic overtones, so mysterious in its earthiness, so startling in its revelation of what the naked body is. If, in the years 1909–10, the wonder and foreboding derive from an apprehension of the mystery of human nakedness, later they are often the outcome of an almost fearful meditation on the relation between life and art. In the *Nasturtiums and "The Dance"* of 1912, Matisse follows Seurat in using as a background a detail of his own large canvases propped up against a wall. And the point is that it is not a background, for it seems more alive than the flowers in front of it.

The supreme expression of Matisse's awe before the mystery of art—if not the supreme expression of his art—are the two large studio interiors of 1916 with a view through a window: *The Studio, Quai St. Michel*, with a reclining model its only occupant, and *The Painter and his Model*. These haunted settings, uncanny in their stillness, tremendous in their silence, are intimations of the alchemy which painting promises and of the anguish which it guarantees.

MATISSE'S manifest obsession with the meaning of art was the obsession of a man who clearly believed unquestioningly in the potency of art. In this, he was possibly the last great representative of the breed which created impressionism and post-impressionism. Picasso heralds in a new attitude of scepticism about the value of art. His work seems to strive to go beyond art's frontiers. He will create tragic images of appalling force, or metaphors which touch the deepest levels of the unconscious, and set them down no matter how, as if his only anxiety were to get

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them out of his system. When he picks up ideas in the museums, it is to toy with them, caricature them, so that his very exploitation of art is an act of iconoclasm. Matisse, on the other hand, seemed to have the simple, almost naïve reverence for art of a Pissarro. In confronting the formal problems involved in realising the most trivial and frivolous themes, he was more searching, more responsible, more serious than Picasso in his handling of his most portentous themes. A lesser genius than Picasso, he was the greater artist.

Matisse's greatness seems to me to depend largely on two attributes of his art, of which the first is the quality of his pictorial imagination. By this expression I mean something different from both pictorial invention on the one hand, and, on the other, interpretative imagination. "Interpretative imagination" is the ability to find the appropriate gestures to convey the dramatic content of the work, the ability to make the figures in a composition behave in such a way as to convince us that the artist actually saw it all happen. It is not a quality with which Matisse was liberally endowed: certainly, there are signs of it in the *Music*, but he had clearly lost what he had of it by the time he came to decorate the Chapel at Vence.

By "pictorial invention" I mean quite simply the capacity to create intrinsically interesting designs, shapes, relations of colour. "Pictorial imagination" is much more than this, for it relates not merely to the picture as a decorative object, but as a re-creation of life. It is the ability to transform natural forms into a system of shapes and colours which is essentially pictorial and autonomous, but re-creates nature in a highly novel and unexpected way which yet seems to be altogether inevitable: it is the ability to create what Cézanne called "a harmony parallel with the harmony of nature."

A characteristically brilliant and charming example of the working of Matisse's pictorial imagination is to be found in the *Red Studio* of 1911 (which once hung, together with *The Studio, Quai St. Michel*, in the Gargoyle Club in Soho). The entire canvas is painted over in a brick-red monochrome. And while some of the objects in the room—including the pictures hung and stacked around the walls—are painted in with their natural colours superimposed on the brick-red ground, others are simply drawn in outline. So, for example, the wooden case of the grandfather-clock is differentiated from the wall behind it and the floor under it only by the lines defining its contour, but the dial is realised in full. It is a very simple yet very subtle idea, highly original, and profoundly *pictorial*. Playing wittily on the essential ambiguity of painting, that a picture is a flat object but not a flat image, it creates a space that is not a space in which solid objects that are not solid acquire the poignant serenity of benevolent wraiths.

There is perhaps one painter of our time whose pictorial imagination surpasses that of Matisse, and this is Bonnard. But Bonnard lacked the other great quality which was Matisse's strength: boldness and directness of vision. In Bonnard's paintings, the colours of nature are marvellously heightened, enriched, transfigured, the shapes rendered beautifully flat without depriving objects of their volume, but the vitality of nature is lowered, as if it had been anæsthetised. With Bonnard it is as if nature were gutted and filleted to facilitate the cooking of the picture. Matisse, on the other hand, however elegant his arabesque may be, however ingratiating his colour, however relaxed his mood, rarely deprives the object of its energy. Thus, in those late line-drawings of the female head or figure which are perhaps his most astonishing *tour de force*, the deliciously fluid, limpid calligraphy never becomes a mere æsthetic conceit, because it never takes its finger off the sexual pulse. And the sexual feeling is no old gentleman's nostalgic projection of his memories on to the face or body actually present: it is direct, immediate.

Power and elegance in perfect concord: his critics were not far wrong when they called him a wild animal, a *fauve*.

David Sylvester

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Communications

Sense and Nonsense

SIR—Mr. Philip Toynbee, in the November issue of ENCOUNTER, indicates very clearly some of the arrogations of the logical positivists. Logical positivism is really no more than a science; that is to say, its point of view is, or pretends to be, a rational one, and knowledge that is confined to the sphere of reason is scientific, whether it is called philosophy or anything else. Knowledge that is beyond the reach of reason is beyond also the scope of science. Metaphysical knowledge is such knowledge. If the logical positivists dismiss the principles of metaphysics as nonsense, that is so much the worse for them, not for those principles, which are not in the least affected by the opinions of a few academic logicians.

Where Mr. Toynbee seems confused is in his appeal from the logic and reason of the logical positivists to the emotionalism of, for instance, Pascal's "*le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas*," and from their language to a vague emotive language, and in his implied belief that a shift of this kind somehow opens the door to the metaphysicians. But metaphysical knowledge is no less beyond the emotions than it is beyond reason. Both the emotions and reason are of the "physiological" order, not of what is "beyond physics" (metaphysics). Nor is the language of metaphysics of an emotive origin. On the contrary, it is a symbolic language of an intelligible origin, whether it is a hieroglyphic or ideographic language that is meant, or the numbers of Pythagoras, or the mythology of a poet like Blake. That we have ceased to understand such language is a measure of our intellectual incapacity; it does not affect the genuineness of the language itself. A language of this kind, that seeks to communicate, as far as is possible, knowledge of a metaphysical order is, of course, beyond the competence of the logical positivists. That competence extends only to logical media of communication.

PHILIP SHERRARD

London, N.6

SIR—In the first paragraphs of his article "Sense and Nonsense," in the November issue, Mr. Philip Toynbee contends that philosophy is not one of the subjects in which the layman is disqualified from intervention. He is not debarred by factual ignorance, since philosophical problems do not turn on questions of fact. If, however, it is part of the layman's intention to describe the present state of the subject, he cannot claim that knowledge of facts is irrelevant; and if he is not acquainted with contemporary academic work, he will be liable to make, as Mr. Toynbee does make, mistakes of fact.

Mr. Toynbee says that "in fact logical positivism has become the official English philosophy of our time. . . . And when philosophers are required by the BBC it is usually logical positivists who are chosen." I have the impression that many laymen would subscribe to these statements. Both, however, are false.

The logical positivists were, twenty or thirty years ago, a comparatively coherent group, members of which were characterised by their acceptance of a few perfectly definite principles and doctrines. There should be no doubt about what a logical positivist was, and indeed Mr. Toynbee is justified in his view that, in 1930, Professor A. J. Ayer was a logical positivist. It is now, however, 1954. And I think it is now quite doubtful whether there are any logical positivists in England at all. There is certainly no well-known, or even fairly well-known philosopher who could properly be so described. The ground for this assertion is simple: hardly anyone, if anyone, today accepts the principles and doctrines of logical positivism. If the BBC wished to engage a logical positivist they would probably have to import one from America.

Mr. Toynbee writes that "the great Viennese masters of the logical positivist school, Wittgenstein and Carnap, have not been denied." This is an extraordinary assertion. It appears to reveal total ignorance of the fact that the early views of Wittgenstein and Carnap have within the last fifteen years been subjected to devastating attack, chiefly by

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Wittgenstein, whose work in the later years of his life has been perhaps the most important influence on contemporary English philosophers. To be unaware that Wittgenstein altered his views quite fundamentally is to be ignorant of a fact of the greatest importance; nor is this a fact which should have proved difficult to discover. I suspect that the name of Professor J. L. Austin is quite unknown to Mr. Toynbee; and that if he has heard of Professor Ryle, he has been content with the erroneous assumption that he, too, is just another logical positivist.

If Mr. Toynbee had claimed only to expose the errors of logical positivism, I should have thought that at this time of day it was hardly worth doing, but that of course he is fully entitled to have his say. To suggest, however, that all or most or even many contemporary English philosophers are logical positivists, is to be guilty of gross factual inaccuracy. It should not be concluded, of course, that contemporary English philosophers are of any kind that Mr. Toynbee would like; but that they are not of this particular kind, which he dislikes, is an unquestionable, and really ought to have been an obvious fact.

MARY WARNOCK

St. Hugh's College, Oxford

SIR—Mr. Toynbee's attack was well delivered, and I have little quarrel with its main point, apart from his tone of launching as a new crusade an old ship which has merely been refuelling. But who are the logical positivists who dominate Cambridge? Professor Wisdom? Professor Braithwaite? Dr. Lewy? Surely not Dr. Ewing? Perhaps it is the ghost of Wittgenstein, whose "apocalyptic message" (how different from that of Carnap!) seems curiously unaffected by either edition of *Language, Truth and Logic.*

The truth of the matter is that "positivist" (the "logical" seems largely to have been dropped now) has become for some people a sort of swear-word, just as has "metaphysician" for others. And just as Professor Ayer's manifesto fails precisely because it is incapable of distinguishing those metaphysicians who talk sense from those who do not, so a net (of whatever name) large enough to catch the philosophers who "dominate Oxford, Cambridge and London" would be quite useless at characterising any of them.

An interest in the workings of language is doubtless what Mr. Toynbee is getting at. And this can be very laudable. In order to discover just what someone is doing in making a moral assertion, it is surely a good idea to examine how the assertion is used. The fact that some people *prejudge* this enquiry with a previous moral belief (which certainly does not arise from the enquiry) doesn't invalidate the method. Other philosophers do not share these prejudices. I fear that the picture of British philosophy that a reader, more lay than Mr. Toynbee, will get from his article is of a parade of party-members and fellow-travellers, led by Professor Ayer with *Language, Truth and Logic* (second edition), chanting the Verification Principle, marching toward some unspecified Wittgensteinian apocalypse. And this is the sheerest nonsense. A closer look at the parade ground will disclose little groups of people talking together and facing in different directions.

Mr. Toynbee should come to Cambridge and watch his positivists at work. He might find them doing something which looks strangely like metaphysics.

ANDOR GOMME

Clare College, Cambridge

SIR—All honour to Mr. Philip Toynbee for his critique of the reigning school of British philosophy. I should like to second his protest, while at the same time suggesting some revisions in its formulation. Although it is unlikely that the faithful will listen to our heresies, there are some errors which give justifiable offence and which in voicing our objections we ought therefore to avoid. We ought not to label our antagonist "logical positivism," for we shall only be laughed out of court unheard, if we do. The Bright Young Men of the BBC pride themselves most particularly on having left this simple-minded theory behind them. It's true that Carnap, Schlick and others held a view so entitled in the days of the "Vienna Circle"; but Carnap and his American associates have long since abandoned the name. And if the British wing have not, as Mr. Toynbee says, denied Carnap, it is because they think him not interesting or relevant enough to deny. The early Wittgenstein, who influenced the positivist Carnap, they *have* denied. It was Wittgenstein himself who took the lead in making that denial, and it is precisely this conversion of the master that is the pride of Those who Follow in his Train. Moreover, in view of this much heralded conversion, Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* is a very questionable text on which to base our attack. Like the name "logical positivism" it has had a vogue which is over. The "experts" who dominate philosophical discussion in Britain belong in the main to a group very conscious of having transcended this "crude" early period. Mr. Toynbee aptly shows the contradiction, in the case of Professor Ayer, between his later preface and the unaltered text of the thirties. One may

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guess the reason: Professor Ayer himself must recognise that a change has taken place which his work has not followed. He refers to *Language, Truth and Logic* as a "young man's book," and to the present school it represents also a youthful stage in their development; when they recognised only a distinction between the scientific or factual and the non-scientific or emotive use of language. Its debunking, they now think, was too wide, its acknowledgement of meaning too narrow. Now, so they say, they acknowledge all sorts and varieties in the use of language: fictional, imperative, and what not. It has even been suggested by one of the very few of the BYM whom all the others agree to consider Extremely Clever that some highly modified form of metaphysics may after all be admitted into the class of activities so odiously referred to as "doing philosophy" (as if it were a dance step or a kind of fancy needlework—as indeed, in their practice of it, it very nearly is). Moreover, all these uses of languages, they declare, they now consider not as verbal simply but as activities going on among other activities: their analysis has been enriched by the insight that speaking a language is like playing rugby or bridge.

If Mr. Toynbee objects that this is not such a great enrichment, again I quite agree. We are asked, in the name of philosophy, to learn a highly sophisticated parlour game from which reflection on the most serious or deeply controversial problems is debarred. See Miss Iris Murdoch on the "activity" kind of analysis (of which she herself has been an accomplished practitioner): ". . . The scene of this activity is for the British empiricist an everyday one from which certain conflicts are excluded. The 'world' of *The Concept of Mind* is the world in which people play cricket, cook cakes, make simple decisions, remember their childhood and go to the circus; not the world in which they commit sins, fall in love, say prayers or join the Communist Party." But inside this tight little world the inhabitants do really think they have performed a Copernican revolution. If, as again, I should agree with Mr. Toynbee in believing, they have only taught an old dog new tricks, we have to acknowledge the novelty of the tricks—with which they are so wholeheartedly delighted—before attempting to demonstrate the personal identity of the animal.

MARJORIE GRENE

Co. Wicklow, Ireland

Mr. Toynbee Replies

It is clear that I must admit to a terminological error and a tendency to disregard both the recent development and the internal ramifications of the philosophical school which I was trying to attack. Christians, after all, are no longer known as Galileans, and there has been a rich flavouring of new doctrine to accompany that change of title. Similarly, there is an evident distinction between the faiths of Presbyterians and Roman Catholics.

Nevertheless the Hindu or Heathen who observes Christianity from the outside sees it as a continuous tradition which is quite different from the tradition to which he himself belongs. And when his country is invaded by Christian missionaries under military escort it makes little difference to him whether they be Portuguese Jesuits or dour emissaries of the Kirk.

In deference to their self-chosen change of title I will refer in future to Linguistic Analysts and leave the old and narrower title to the oblivion they desire for it. Yet it is very hard not to feel that the new Linguistic Analyst is, to the equivalent of Heathen or Hindu, little more than the old Logical Positivist writ large. In defence of my continued presumption I would say that I have had close friends within this school ever since I was at Oxford nearly twenty years ago: I am happy to claim Professor Ayer as the closest and oldest of them. I have even known personally, *pace* Miss Warnock, both Professor Austin and Professor Ryle. I have often listened to, and taken an ignorant part in, the philosophical discussions of Linguistic Analysts; I have read several of their books and articles and I seldom miss one of the many opportunities for hearing them on the BBC. These are not the qualifications of a serious student of the movement, but they seemed to justify the precipitancy of a fool who hoped that better-informed angels might be persuaded to follow him. I am delighted that the American philosopher, Mrs. Marjorie Grene, has done so, and I happily accept her skilful emendation of my own crude assault.

The point about my long acquaintanceship with Linguistic Analysts is that it has made me extremely familiar with the kind of things they say, the kind of language they use, and the peculiar intonation which the Oxford members of the school have always favoured. I have been aware of changes of emphasis and of an increasing bifurcation into subsects of the dominant faith. Professor Wisdom, for example, clearly ranges so widely and richly in his speculations that he represents the extreme liberal wing of the movement. On the other hand there are certain younger products of the Oxford mission who no longer believe that any theory of knowledge is possible at all. But the space which separates these two extremes is surely no greater than that which separates, for example, Berkeley from Hegel, yet

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both of these philosophers belong to what is known and accepted as the Idealist School.

Since the writing and publication of my article a Third Programme "circus" of philosophers has begun to inform us about the linguistic *Revolution in Philosophy*. There may be Jacobins as well as Girondins among the participants, but it is clear that all of them are proud children of the revolution which they extol. If they unite for such occasions they must expect, on other occasions, to be observed as a whole.

To Mr. Sherrard I apologise for an imprecise and misleading use of the word "metaphysics" which was partly induced, perhaps, by the looseness with which it is used, as a term of abuse, by Professor Ayer.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

Boxford, Suffolk

"A Subaltern in Kenya"

SIR—It perhaps is *mesquin* to comment critically on a well-written story—Mr. John Muggeridge's "A Subaltern in Kenya." Everyone will agree with him that Mau-Mau should be fought with all possible means. But I wonder whether many Europeans on this continent would not consider the picture incomplete. There is a widely accepted misconception about Mau-Mau. It is regarded as a "native" problem. But to this word "native" its whole semantic value should be restored : everyone born or permanently living in the land, whether Bantu or European, should be so called. Like every ethnical and national group of recent creation, the white Africans, the Afrikanders of the tropics, are chauvinistic. As Mr. Muggeridge says, many Europeans pride themselves in not speaking Swahili. To comprehend this it should be remembered : (a) that Kiswahili is a foreign tongue for the native too, imported by the Arab slave-traders from the eastern coast and taken over by the Europeans ; (b) that the Swahili vocabulary of the average European attains perhaps 400 words, with a scant knowledge and even smaller respect for its rigid grammar and syntax. The resulting "pidgin" Swahili is pretty ridiculous to the Bantu, who learn this foreign tongue in schools we created ! It is not astonishing that nothing or little was known about Mau-Mau before the first murders. . . .

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BOOKS

The Judgement of Clio

IT WOULD appear that no man's bad reputation, no matter how hardly earned, is safe in the hands of our historians—none of us is immune from rehabilitation. If the Borgias were in the habit of poisoning their guests, this was a practice they learned from their contemporaries, and it is unfair to blame someone for having been reared in bad company; besides, they probably did not poison as many people as legend would have it; and these people were not of much use to future historians, in any case. Even when Stalin was alive, what seemed to interest most historians was his "place in history," and not whether he was the kind of man one holds up for emulation to the young—which is, incredibly enough, the way historians used to regard statesmen, once upon a time. Hitler, it is true, had a universally bad academic press; but, then, he had a tendency to burn books in public, which naturally infuriated their authors. The next generation of historians will surely be less "subjective" in their reactions, and we may confidently look forward to their producing all sorts of novel "revaluations."

This, of course, is what is bound to happen when the notion gets around that history is a science. One sympathises with ink-stained and obscure professors who wish to share in the soft glow of public approval that bathes the figure of the chemist in his laboratory—so sleek, so prudent, so knowing. A scientist, everyone understands, does not praise or censure; he dispassionately studies the forces at work. A historian who wished to be a scientist would obviously do likewise. But what somehow gets overlooked is the fact that, while it may be impossible to take a moral attitude toward atoms or molecules, it is impossible *not* to take a moral attitude toward human beings. To look on human beings dispassionately is itself a passionate act with a moral (or, more precisely, immoral) quality—it is, in effect, a decision to look at them inhumanly. This is just the way Hitler and Stalin looked at mankind; it is the way all statesmen look at mankind, to one degree or another—that is why "power corrupts." Until the advent of "scientific" history, on the other hand, it was taken for granted that corruption was what one studied, but certainly not what one aimed to learn.

But learned it we have, to an extent where we are not aware of having learned anything at all, it seems so natural. Last year, for example, Mr. Fred Hoyle, the distinguished cosmologist, wrote a book called *A Decade of Decision*, which dealt with some very mundane matters. The book got mixed reviews, which was rather more than it deserved. But there was one sentence in it that would, in happier days, have made his fame; and none of the reviewers so much as noticed it. It read: "If we are to burn to death millions of Russian children let us do it in the interests of our security, or to keep our stomachs full, but never in the interests of morality." Now it does not matter to the children, of course, whether they are exterminated to gratify Mr. Hoyle's stomach or his morals. But one had hoped it mattered to Mr. Hoyle, even if he is a scientist. Doubtless Mr. Hoyle is really a mild

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and benevolent person who, like the rest of us, turns pale at the sight of blood and is appalled at the idea of calculated, conscienceless brutality. But it is significant that he should seem to be under the impression that this kind of political rhetoric is, if not *de rigueur*, at least *chic*.

IF HISTORY is a science, it will be governed by general laws; and ever since the shift from "literary" to "scientific" history, some two hundred years ago, a considerable effort has gone into the discovery of these laws. The whole episode has a decidedly comic aspect, serenely reflected in the person of Laplace, who asserted that, if he had all the necessary data about the location and movement of particles in the universe, he could predict everything, whether cosmic, social, or individual. He didn't have the data, so had to settle for regarding everything that happened as an unmade prediction come true. In 1802, the third volume of his *Mécanique Céleste* was prefixed with a pæan of praise to Napoleon. In the 1814 edition of his *Théorie Analytique de Probabilités*, he wrote: "The fall of empires which aspired to universal dominion could be predicted with very high probability to one versed in the calculus of chances."

Not all those who tried to discover the laws of history were as simple as Laplace, nor as ineffectual. Hegel, Comte, Marx, Spengler—though none of them found what they were looking for, yet they had profound and original insights into man's nature and destiny on earth, insights which themselves powerfully affected that nature and that destiny. Few today seriously consider any of them—with the exception of Marx—as "scientific" thinkers, and none of them was; but they all have helped create the moral climate in which we live, and in which men premeditate crimes in the name of History that they would never dare commit under their own signatures.

This question of historical determinism is the subject of Isaiah Berlin's new essay,* which was—oddly enough—the first Auguste Comte Memorial Trust Lecture at the London School of Economics. "Oddly enough," because Mr. Berlin's essay is a brilliant polemic against the type of mind represented by Comte and his intellectual heirs. Like all of Mr. Berlin's writings—one should perhaps say discourses, the speaking voice comes through so clearly—this one is intense, thoughtful, erudite, and yet also animated, even ebullient. The sentences, and the thinking behind them, are as serpentine as ever, thereby providing an extra dash of excitement: he frequently appears to be wandering into the pastures of heterodoxy and always swoops back triumphantly to the commons of plain sense. More and more Mr. Berlin is assuming the role of Lord Acton in modern English historiography—the conscience and the critic rather than a proper Oxford evangelist, a scholar who defends the lay world against the abuse of scholarship.

In *Historical Inevitability*, Mr. Berlin rigorously examines the various schools of thought which have some portion in that nebulous concept. Especially valuable is his scrutiny of the idea of "science" as applied to history, and his exposition of the internal contradictions in the methodology of such leading historians as Herbert Butterfield and E. H. Carr, the one claiming that we can never know enough to render judgement on the past, the other that judgement is superfluous since the past is what happened and there's an end to it. His examination of the Hegelian and Spenglerian mystagogies, which convert abstract speculative entities ("civilisation," "nation," "state,") into active presences, follows lines that are by now familiar; but there is no harm, and possibly much good, in refuting errors that play dead and may be merely hibernating.

Always Mr. Berlin appeals from academic fantasia to our ordinary human sensibleness:

> No one will wish to deny that we do often argue about the best among the possible courses of action open to human beings in the present and past and future, in fiction and in dreams; that historians (and judges and juries) do attempt to establish, as well as they are able, what these possibilities are; that the ways in which these lines are drawn mark the frontiers between reliable and unreliable history; that what is called realism (as opposed to fancy or ignorance of life or utopian dreams) consists precisely in the placing of what occurred (or might occur) in the context of what could have happened (or could happen) and in the demarcation of this from what could not; that this is all (as I think Sir Lewis Namier once suggested) that the sense of history, in the end, comes to; that upon this capacity all historical (as well as legal) justice depends. . . .

This, one feels, is the last word. But it is proposed in so modest a manner that one easily

* *Historical Inevitability*. By ISAIAH BERLIN. Oxford University Press. 6s.

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overlooks just how final this last word is. One may think that he is simply calling for moderation in passing moral judgement on human affairs—as indeed he is. But he is also calling for judgement. That this judgement should be cautious and generous is wise counsel, but it does not affect the ultimate need for judgement. One can see this more clearly if one re-states Mr. Berlin's thesis in different words, in the vocabulary of religious faith rather than that of an urbane humanism. It has, in fact, already been done many times. As, for instance, in the following passage by Simone Weil:

> He who does not realise to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow-creatures . . . those whom chance separated from him by an abyss. . . . Only he who has measured the dominion of force, and knows how to reject it, is capable of love and justice.

Irving Kristol

FOOTBALL AND CULTURE

ENGLISH culture, T. S. Eliot has remarked, embraces elements as diverse as 19th century Gothic churches, boiled cabbage cut into sections, and the Cup Final. Of these the Cup Final is pre-eminent, a state occasion of sport, first attended by the King in 1914, but long before then a popular festival to which spectators "came in all their glory" from distant parts of the country, many of them visiting London for the first time. But the Cup Final is merely the crowning event of the football year: from August to April nearly half-a-million Englishmen play football regularly, more than a million spectators watch Saturday football matches each week, over seven million people regularly submit their football pool coupons, and several hundred sports writers and analysts write about nothing else but football. Neither boiled cabbage nor Gothic churches, the 12th of August nor even cricket are anything like so popular. To many Englishmen, football is not an element in national culture but life itself.

Mr. Morris Marples has written an excellent social history of football,* which goes far to explain why the game has secured such a hold on the community. The hold is relatively recent, and it can be considered, in the first instance, as the most prominent feature of the awakening of interest in organised games—as opposed to field sports—which began in the first half of the 19th century and has gone on to spread throughout most of the world. "Soccer" can be played without overmuch instruction on any ground, in any clothes, or in any climate. It is a natural universal religion and like many modern secular religions its message was first proclaimed in the English public schools. Its rule-makers codified the game in the middle years of the century: by 1880 it had acquired such powerful controlling organisations as the Football Association (1863) and the Rugby Union (1871); by the end of the 1880's it had acquired its full-time professionals, its special vestments (shorts only became general about this time), its penalties for breaches of discipline, its missionaries in foreign lands, and its national Cup Final, when "a northern horde of uncouth garb and strange oaths," as the *Pall Mall Gazette* described it, would descend on London. The last innovation to be accepted was the authority of the referee: there were occasions in the 1890's, even in London, when "the growling and exhibition of discontent to which referees are subjected after a game is over is most painful." In time, growling was to grow far more ominous in the missionary territories of South America, and the English referee was to stand out as the most representative English contribution to the success of the game.

IN FACT, England made a far more distinctive contribution. It provided the world not with one football game, but with two—eventually with three—and the two games were not so much alternative sporting codes as specialised

* *A History of Football.* By MORRIS MARPLES. Secker and Warburg. 21s.

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products of the English class system. "Soccer" was the popular game, quickly emancipated from its public school origins and adopted by the masses. Without the growth of cities and the introduction of the Saturday half-holiday, it might have stayed confined to a few "gentlemen" who were conservative enough to prefer dribbling to running with the ball. As it was, a new industrial population clamoured for games to watch as well as to play, and new working-class clubs met the demand: Middlesbrough, still active in 1954 though in a sadly languishing state, was inaugurated in 1876 at a tripe supper, Rotherham United under a street lamp.

The first national token of working-class control over the game was the victory of Blackburn Olympic over the Old Etonians in the Cup Final of 1883. Three weavers, a spinner, another cotton operative, an iron worker, a master plumber, a picture framer, a dentist's assistant, and two disguised professionals beat the cream of the gentlemen of leisure by two goals—only, it is fair to add, after extra time. "Soccer" passed into the feet of the working classes and has remained there ever since: when the King or Queen attends the Cup Final, and the Secretary of the Football Association is nowadays usually knighted for his services, it merely shows that Democracy has arrived.

"Rugger" travelled by a different path. Although a group of northern towns adopted a distinctive code of their own (Rugby League) and the services of professional or half-professional players, the parent Rugby Union steadfastly set its face against professionalism. It captured most of the public schools and later the grammar schools, attracted middle-class rather than working-class players, and made a cult of the "courage, self-sacrifice, unselfishness, and devotion" of the game. Relations between the Rugby Union and the small but vigorous Rugby League express most of the frigidity of the English class system. "Soccer," by contrast, is not so much challenged as ignored or dismissed. When its abuses are attacked, it is not so much a game which is in question but a whole view of society.

It is possible, as Mr. Marples does, to go beyond contemporary social argument and trace the history of football back through the Fall of Rome, the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, and the Puritan Revolution. One of the most interesting parts of his book, perhaps because it is least expected, is that which treats of origins. As is proper in most branches of historical scholarship, the origins are in doubt. The ensuing battles between the learned men of football bear little relation to the battles between football teams or football fans: indeed, they would appeal more to Mr. Eliot than to Mr. Matthews, Mr. Whitaker, and Mr. Vernon. One school of thought discovers a Roman origin of the game, a second—more plausibly—a Norman, and a third—more imaginatively—sees the beginnings in a pagan ritual.

The third theory is much the most fascinating. According to it, football began as a fertility rite. The ball was the sun; it sometimes had to be buried in the ground (compare golf) rather than booted into the net; it was frequently brought out only at Shrovetide; it was kicked about in more than one part of the country by teams of villagers, one consisting entirely of married men and the other of bachelors. There was even a remarkable match at Inveresk, which took place annually in the last years of the 18th century, between married women and spinsters. The married women always won. Mr. Marples collects scores of interesting examples to support the fertility theory. He even quotes a more surprising variation of it, the view that the ball represented not the sun but the head of a sacrificial beast. A game played at Haxey in Lincolnshire at Epiphany had as its object the securing of a roll of sacking or leather known as the "hood," and rival communities battled for it. The hood represented half a bullock and the prize was the agricultural plenty the winning of the hood would bring.

The charm of the sacrificial animal theory is that it mysteriously conveys the impression that the Bull Fight and the Cup Final can be explained in the same terms. There were other remarkable theories which were propounded by footballers themselves and not by outsiders. When at Kingston-on-Thames, in 1790, a group of several persons was accused of riotous conduct in playing football, its captains pleaded in justification that they were celebrating the anniversary of an ancient victory over the Danes, when the Danish leader's head had been kicked about the streets. This theory was sufficiently plausible and patriotic to secure their acquittal.

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UTILITY, not Antiquity, was the final argument which was to prevail in the successful victory of football, but it required an industrial society to plead effectively for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As late as 1796, when a Derby footballer was drowned after a *mêlée*, the local jury condemned street football as "a custom which has no better recommendation than its antiquity (and is) disgraceful to humanity and civilisation, subversive of good order and government, and destructive of the morals, properties, and very lives of our inhabitants." "We have unanimously resolved," the Mayor and Justices added, "THAT SUCH CUSTOMS SHALL FROM HENCEFORTH BE DISCONTINUED." But no fiat of an unreformed corporation could permanently hold back the victory of England's greatest mass game, although the game had to pass from the street to the field before it could reasonably be encouraged. The true secret of its success lies not in the dark region where myth and history meet, or in the first Elizabethan age when the tragic hero of a play could proclaim "I am the very foote-ball of the starres," but in the social history of the last hundred years. Perhaps it was then, too, that most of Mr. Eliot's other components of national culture—the boiled cabbage included—first began to cohere.

Asa Briggs

THE SPANISH PREDICAMENT

DR. AMERICO CASTRO is a scholar and humanist who has made many contributions to our understanding of the Spanish classics. Since the Civil War he has been living in the United States and studying the Middle Ages. The present work,* which is the result of these studies, is a translation, greatly enlarged, of *España en su Historia*, which first came out in 1948.

Dr. Castro is a historian of a rather unusual sort. He has a philosophy of history derived, it would seem, from Wilhelm Dilthey, according to which the role of the historian should be to reveal the "inwardness" of past societies by showing their life as an expression of the values they believed in. He must "listen to the people of the past as they felt themselves existing" and understand both the psychological predicament in which they found themselves and the kinds of actions that were open to them. It is especially important that he grasp the *mode* in which they held those values: for example, Frenchmen and Spaniards shared the same general notions on honour and religion, but they felt them and therefore acted on them in entirely different manners. That is to say, history is the means by which one arrives at an understanding of the uniqueness of a particular people, "its basic position within its own unescapable life," and the person who writes it should set out in the spirit of a literary critic or biographer rather than in that of a contributor to the *Cambridge History*.

As we sink into this long, loosely constructed book, we discover gradually what Dr. Castro is after. He wishes to explain what the Spaniard is, how he has come to be what he is, and why he has not developed along the road followed by West Europeans. This is a very old theme among Spanish writers which has become particularly acute within recent years. The age-long ineptitude of Spain in political and economic matters offers so striking a contrast to the greatness and stability of its culture. Dr. Castro, whose general approach reminds one of Unamuno's, ransacks the Middle Ages to find an explanation.

Abbreviating greatly, the view he arrives at is that the "Spanish peculiarity" is founded on two things—a sense of insecurity which keeps the Spaniards in a constant tension, and a feeling of emptiness. The first is the result of a

* *The Structure of Spanish History*. By AMERICO CASTRO. Princeton University Press. $9. (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege. 72s.)

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complex state set up by the necessity of alternately fighting the Moslems and living in close association with them. The second comes from the fact that the Spaniards confined their activities to warfare and agriculture, leaving petty commerce and the handicrafts to the Moslems, and the learned professions and higher commerce to the Jews. To preserve their sense of superiority over these more cultivated peoples, they persuaded themselves that all gainful work was degrading. The only thing worth being was a gentleman and this brought with it the penalty of boredom and dissatisfaction, as well as envy of those who had enriched themselves by working. When this envy led to the expulsion of the Jews and Moors and to the persecution of the converts, Spain became an economic vacuum kept in existence by the silver mines of the Indies.

These views of the Spanish development are brought out in the course of a deeply interesting examination of Spain's medieval life. Dr. Castro discusses at length the belief in Santiago, the origins of the Inquisition, the mania for "purity of blood" and above all the poets and prose writers. His desire to prove his points sometimes causes him to omit facts that do not fit his theories and to attach too much weight to others. For example he is continually contrasting the "instinctive" life of Spaniards with the "rational" life of the French, yet does not see that the arguments he uses to show how the *Chanson de Roland* fits into this picture could also be used to show that Calderon's *autos* are typically French. Why too, one might ask, in discussing the Archpriest of Hita, does he introduce a long comparison with Ibn Hazm's *The Dove's Neck-Ring*, a psychological work that stands by itself, and omit all reference to Ibn Guzmán's *Diwan*, with which it has so many affinities? These, however, are minor objections. With his fine historical intuition and his wealth of learning Dr. Castro nearly always throws new light on what he touches. He is particularly interesting on the Spanish Inquisition which, as he shows, owed its origin to the rivalry between two groups of converted Jews—those who believed fanatically in their new religion and those who did not. The sense of being of Jewish origin set up an *Angst* or tension which not only gave Spain its Inquisitors, but also the mystical and ascetic movement of the 16th century. We can today put down the passion for self-revelation in St. Teresa—who till a few years ago was thought to be so typically Castilian—to her feeling of guilt at coming from the race of deicides. Indeed there are reasons for thinking that St. John of the Cross may also have had Jewish ancestors.

The conclusion that Dr. Castro finally comes to is that the Spaniard is a different sort of person from other West Europeans. He is distinguished by what Dr. Castro calls his integralism. His purpose is to exist as fully as possible within himself, not to make or do. He lives in the belief that "the only calling worthy of a man is to be a man, and nothing more." When he acts, he does so like Wordsworth's Leach-Gatherer, with his whole being; and when he is not acting he is enjoying the satisfaction of being himself. Hence on the one hand those furious figures, the Conquistadors, "consuming themselves in the tension of their whole existence," and on the other those gentlemen who, till the Civil War woke them up, spent their days motionless like hibernating lizards in their club armchairs, bathing in the pleasure they got from its being clear to every passerby that they had nothing to do except breathe. Yet belief is necessary to him. An egoist inclined to solipsism, neither reason, knowledge, law, nor anything outside himself can have much effect on him. A tribesman, he can love his family, his friends, and his native town. But unless he adheres blindly to a cause or leader in whom he can merge his ego, he cannot fully and actively possess himself.

The Spaniard, therefore, if Dr. Castro is right, can never hope to assimilate Western civilisation. The scientific attitude will always be foreign to him. We must not expect from him efficient organisation or democratic politics. All these things are importations or imitations, sometimes necessary but never spontaneous. He was born to a noble but tragic vocation and must always suffer from a sense of being self-thwarted. Yet he can offer something that the West has lost—personality. This implies a deeper hold on life than we have, but also a more radical disillusion, for a Spaniard cannot live on the surface of things or travel with the current. He is by constitution a no-sayer.

So far Dr. Castro. Yet when I put down his fascinating and suggestive book I begin to

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wonder. Can it be true that the Spaniards are still dogged by what happened to them during the Middle Ages? Are there no signs of their having changed since the 17th century? Looking round me at this busy country, so engrossed in work and money-making, I feel that he has come too much under the spell of the past. After centuries of economic stagnation, Spaniards are today beginning to emulate other European nations. But how far can they go in doing so? One thing that Dr. Castro never mentions is that Spain is cursed with a poor soil, an insufficient rainfall, and an almost complete lack of coal and oil. Severe droughts are frequent. Huge areas are patiently ploughed and sown every year which in the United States would be allowed to lie fallow. Is it not possible to lay too much stress on the peculiarities of the Spanish character and too little upon its unrewarding climate and geography?

Gerald Brenan

EUROPE BEFORE THE FLOOD

IN THE age of Malenkov and McCarthy, even the age of Hitler and Baldwin is almost forgotten, though at least half of us can remember it. But the period that ended in the war of 1914–18 has suffered still more. Few living can remember it well, the public takes little interest in it, and the pontiffs of historiography, at least in this country, consider it indecent, or even impious, to undertake its study. Whatever these pontiffs write is by definition dispassionate history, whatever is written on periods subsequent to some date chosen by themselves can be dismissed as pamphleteering.

That "modern Europe," whatever that means, has roots that stretch deep into medieval and ancient times, and that the frailty and sinfulness of man are older stories still, we can all agree. But we need not for that reason deny that towards the end of the 18th century two mighty forces—secular utopian thought and the industrial revolution—began a transformation of human society which in the 19th century spread through Europe and in the 20th has extended to the limits of the earth. The year 1789 is no more than a convenient symbol of the opening of this era. If there be anyone who thinks that history began in 1789, he is an ass, but those who argue that no historical work can begin in 1789 are asses too.

The 150 years from the French Revolution to the Second World War are the field of a projected Oxford History of Modern Europe, edited by Mr. Alan Bullock and Mr. F. W. D. Deakin. It is to include volumes on the main European states, with due attention to political, social, and economic development, and other volumes on the history of ideas and on international relations, to be treated from a general European angle. It would have been nice if all sixteen volumes could have appeared simultaneously. Unfortunately, historians are as busy and harassed, as subject to economic and other pressures, as other men, including even book-reviewers. The first volume to see the light of day is by Mr. A. J. P. Taylor, and starts right in the middle of the period and the subject.* It is one of the volumes on international relations, and it deals with the years 1848–1918. It is Mr. Taylor's misfortune that his book cannot be taken together with the other volumes, especially with those concerning the social development of the main European states. Mr. Taylor should be thanked for completing so promptly so vast a task. Instead he has received full measure of denunciation, designed partly for himself and partly for his editors. However, this should surprise no one: it is so much easier to sneer at a book than to read it. When the other volumes are out, they will only add to the stature of this one.

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* *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918.* By A. J. P. TAYLOR. Oxford University Press, 30s.

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THAT Mr. Taylor is well aware of the social and economic factors in history, he has shown in his previous works. In this one he has rigidly limited himself to his subject, which is diplomatic history. Where economic problems directly affected diplomacy, he has said so; the wider and deeper connections between economic trends and foreign policy are mentioned only in his brief but brilliant introduction "The Great Powers of Europe." This careful self-discipline is not a defect of the book but one of its merits.

Some time between 1848 and 1914—probably during the 1890's—the entry of the masses into political life began to affect foreign policy. New social and sectional groups became powerful, and conflicts of class and nationality took various forms. This was true both of urban democratic France and Britain and of "underdeveloped countries," such as Hungary and Russia, in which extremely rapid economic and cultural modernisation coexisted with political repression and struggles between nationalist movements. Fear of disruption from within was certainly a factor in the decision of Russia to go to war in 1904, and of Austria to do the same in 1914. In this very broad sense the "class-struggle" made its contribution to the First World War. Mr. Taylor briefly shows himself aware of the point, but it is for the volumes of his colleagues to explore it.

But even a purely diplomatic history can explode the cruder Marxist view that the war was brought about by a struggle between capitalists for markets. Economic interests drew the advanced industrial countries together much more than they pulled them apart. Marxists and German chauvinists may agree that Britain declared war on Germany to smash a trade rival: their agreement does not make it true. The only country that systematically pursued economic advantage by territorial aggression during a large part of this period was Russia, in Persia and still more in the Far East. It did so because its industries were too inefficient to stand open trade competition. It is in any case doubtful to what extent Russian industry can be called "capitalist." Factories were privately owned and private profits were made, but the driving force behind the Russian industrial revolution was state policy, and the type and scale of industry was much more closely controlled by government than was the case in any other European state. Even Witte, the nearest to the business world of all Russian ministers, aimed not so much at wealth for Russian capitalists as at imperial greatness for Russia. Economic factors most directly affected foreign policy when they were linked with strategical ones. Railways and sea communications are important, not only to traders and to those who manufacture rails or ships, but also to armies and navies. The Baghdad Railway was as much a strategic as an economic problem. The Black Sea straits were more important to Russia after than before the Crimean War because the new railways in the Ukraine brought Russian grain to Black Sea ports. Export of grain through the Straits was the chief means to pay for the imports on which depended the industrialisation of Russia, itself necessary for the military strength of the Russian empire. In 1878 pan-Slav excitement and religious emotions about Tsargrad played their part. ("Sooner or later," wrote Dostoevski, "Constantinople must be ours.") But twenty years later Russia was content that things remain as they were, provided that no hostile Power obtained direct or indirect control over the Straits.

THE choice of 1848 as the beginning of this book may be disputed. That year was a landmark in the history of political ideas and movements rather than of diplomacy. The end of the Crimean War might have been a better date. On the other hand Mr. Taylor's date makes it possible to see as a whole the foreign policy of Napoleon III, which is an undoubted advantage. His reign was the last period in which France was an active force in international relations. After 1870 her policy was passive; the task was no longer to impose the will of France on Europe, but to defend France from the dangers of a new and unfamiliar Europe. The question of Alsace-Lorraine was a permanent limiting factor in European affairs. It prevented Franco-German cooperation, but it did not cause the war of 1914.

Mr. Taylor has acquired the reputation of being "anti-German." For a large part of the 20th century the facts have been anti-German. But labels stick, and an odd phrase can always be detached from its context to support a prefabricated argument. Those who take the trouble to read and understand this book will not find it anti-German, and it is safe to predict that Germans with an open mind will not find

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it so. Mr. Taylor rightly stresses certain facts of German policy. The adoption of the Schlieffen Plan ensured that the Germans "could not settle with Russia until they had defeated France; therefore they had to attack France at once, even if the war originated in the Balkans." Again, German direct interference in Constantinople was a challenge to Russia's independence; Mr. Taylor gives its due importance to the Liman von Sanders affair of 1913. He has some very stimulating things to say about the transition from the European policy of Bismarck to the *Weltpolitik* of the late nineties and the following decade. This is of course a complex subject, on which later volumes in the History will have to throw light.

The Power which throughout this period has the most impressive record of blunders to offer is Austria. The reign of Francis Joseph almost exactly coincides with Mr. Taylor's period. During his reign Vienna was the centre of a civilisation which contemporaries rightly admired, and whose passing the present generation—especially in Central Europe—may understandably regret. But the glamour of Vienna cannot efface the ineptitude of her statesmen, the effects of which the whole world has felt. Austria refused to cede her Italian provinces while there was still time. She antagonised Russia in the Crimean War but failed to take such action as would weaken the foundations of Russian power. Still more ridiculous was her half-hearted association with the protests against Russian action in Poland in 1863. The falsity of the Austrian position at this time was of course a result of the earlier errors of participation in the partitions of Poland in 1772 and 1815, which had brought Austria no advantages. In the 1860's Austrian statesmen were outmanœuvred by Bismarck. In 1878 Austria occupied Bosnia, which one might perhaps call the Alsace-Lorraine of Eastern Europe. It is true that Serbia was a less important state than France, but in the end she caused no less trouble. All these are blunders of foreign policy, by which Austria declined in thirty years from a great and stable power to a satellite of Germany and a disruptive factor in Europe. After 1878 it was no longer a matter of diplomacy. Austria was destroyed by explosive forces from within her frontiers, and in the process she went far towards destroying Europe. This is a theme on which Mr. Taylor has written well in the past; now he leaves it to his colleagues.

Stephen Spender

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In comparison with the Austrian record, that of the other Powers, even of Germany, is statesmanlike. Russia was beaten by the Japanese, and Nicholas II could compete with Francis Joseph as the grave-digger of an Empire. But at least Russian diplomacy throughout these seventy years fairly consistently pursued the national interests of Russia. British policy was less foolish and less wicked than it has often been represented. Mr. Taylor admires Salisbury, and argues that, at the turn of the century, isolation was a perfectly feasible policy. But Britain was a difficult Power for Continental states to deal with. She was of no use to Germany as an ally, as she had no army and had no intention of introducing conscription. But once the Germans acted in such a way that they seemed resolved to dominate Europe, Britain was bound to oppose them. The balance of power was the first of all British interests. This balance, Mr. Taylor argues, was destroyed by early 1918. Woodrow Wilson and Lenin were the heralds of a new age. But here he is looking too far ahead. The balance was restored, and Europe was again the centre of the world, for nearly twenty years. It needed Hitler to achieve what Ludendorff had failed to do.

This book is very well written and very concentrated. Mr. Taylor has mastered an immense wealth of material, and has obviously taken pains over every sentence. Perhaps only those who have worked in this field can begin to understand how much effort and how much thought have gone into it. He shows acute insight into the minds of the men who made and were moulded by these events, alike of those for whom one may believe that he has most and least sympathy. No one will agree with all his judgements, for his supreme merit is that he has thought out his views for himself on every point. His book is not easy to read, because it is so compact, because it bursts not so much with chronological facts as with ideas and interpretations. The only way to read it is to read it several times. Those who make the effort will be well rewarded, for many years to come.

Hugh Seton-Watson

CHINA—THEN AND NOW

I

A HUNDRED years ago China was in the throes of the great Taiping rebellion which seriously threatened, but failed to overthrow the Manchu dynasty then reigning in Peking. The rebels having seized Nanking in the previous year and made it their temporary capital —pending the expected capture of Peking— Sir George Bonham, who as Governor of Hong-Kong was then in charge of British interests in China, had ascended the Yangtse in a naval sloop in order to "explain to all parties that the British Government are for the present neutral." He was accompanied by Mr. T. T. Meadows, "Chinese Interpreter in H.M. Civil Service," and an account of this journey together with much miscellaneous information, comment, and speculation was published in 1856, when the outcome of the Taiping revolt was still uncertain. The book has now been reprinted, not only for its historical interest, but also no doubt for a certain contemporary relevance.*

This lively and controversial work, in which the mid-Victorian prose style and the old-fashioned spelling of Chinese names are often all that reminds us of the period of its composition, is an important document for present-day debate about the might-have-been of the Taiping movement. The fashionable theory today is that the Taipings would have done for China what the Meiji Restoration did for Japan had they not been put down by the intervention of Western imperialist powers,

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* *The Chinese and their Rebellions, viewed in connection with their national philosophy, ethics, legislation and administration, to which is added An Essay on Civilisation and its Present State in the East and West.* By THOMAS TAYLOR MEADOWS. Academic Reprints. Stanford, California. $11.00.

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who preferred to prop up an effete and degenerate dynasty rather than face a vigorous reformed China, even though the latter had actually adopted the religion which Western missionaries had come to the country to propagate. It has to be remembered, however, that the campaigns of Ward and Gordon are not the whole story of Western relations with the Taipings, and that at an earlier stage the chief British representative on the spot, far from showing a narrow, reactionary partiality for the existing order, sought to enter into direct relations with the insurgent power. That this enterprise failed was primarily due to the attitude of the Taipings themselves, and by a strange paradox it was in the name of the Christian religion that the Taiping leader, the "Heavenly Prince," put forward demands which Sir George Bonham considered an unsurmountable barrier to diplomatic relations.

The Taipings had started out as a religious sect based on the teaching and publications of Protestant Christian missionaries in Canton; to these had been added direct revelations received by the founder Hung sew tseuen (to use Meadows' spelling) and his principal followers. When the sect was persecuted by the authorities—largely as a result of the annoyance caused to unconverted neighbours by its violent destruction of idols in public temples—Hung proclaimed that he had a divine commission to overthrow the Manchu dynasty and began an armed insurrection.

It was in March 1853 that the rebels captured Nanking, and it was in the following month that Bonham and Meadows arrived by way of the Yangtse before the walls of the city. To Bonham's request for a meeting to discuss conditions of foreign trade in areas which the Taipings controlled or might soon overrun, the ministers of the Heavenly Prince addressed a reply explaining that God, the Heavenly Father, and Jesus, the Heavenly Brother, had appointed the Heavenly Prince as sovereign over the whole world and expressed the hope that "you [the British] will, with us, achieve the merit of diligently serving our Sovereign." Bonham then sent a letter declaring that he was unable to acknowledge himself a subject of the Heavenly Prince or to negotiate with a Chinese ruler on behalf of his own sovereign on other than equal terms. There being no prospect of reaching agreement on this fundamental issue, Bonham sailed away without having made any personal contact with the Heavenly Prince or his ministers. Meadows records, however, that not all the Taipings approved of the official attitude of their government, for one of them admitted to him that "foreign brethren" should not be addressed in the same style as "Chinese brethren."

THIS attitude of the Taiping claimant to the Chinese imperial throne was of course nothing new in China; it was simply the traditional belief that the Chinese emperor, whoever he might be, was the rightful ruler of the world and suzerain of all "barbarian" monarchs. Defeat in war, however, had compelled the Manchu dynasty to retreat from this pretension and conclude treaties with Western powers on a basis of equality, even though at this date the Peking court still refused to receive foreign ambassadors in the capital. The Taipings had merely combined Chinese tradition with their Christianity by equating the Confucian "Mandate of Heaven" with an ordinance of the Christian God. But it was hardly to be expected, that, after years of military and political struggle to abate the arrogance of the Peking court and establish relations with it on a basis regarded in the West as normal, the Western powers should submit to such claims when put forward by a rebel leader who was not yet in possession of the capital of the empire.

A decade elapsed between this incident and the final collapse of the Taiping movement. In the last phase the Manchu government was aided in suppressing the revolt by the services of foreign officers, notably Gordon. But the motive which impelled the foreign merchants of Shanghai to favour the Manchu cause was primarily a desire to put an end to the prolonged continuation of warfare which was disrupting trade in the hinterland of the port. Had the Taipings kept up the momentum of their original advance and captured Peking, there would have been no difficulty about recognising them as the government of China; even if they had merely completed their conquest of the Yangtse valley by capturing Shanghai, the foreign merchants would have been glad to trade with them. But long before Gordon appeared on the scene, it was obvious that their power was waning and that their enterprise had failed; the Western intervention

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was in fact on what was already the winning side in order to hasten an end to a struggle so injurious to commerce. It was Tseng Kuo-fan and not General Gordon who really crushed the revolt, though the build-up of the Gordon legend in this country has always obscured this historical fact.

It can of course be argued that the Western powers should have remained strictly neutral to the end, and Meadows eloquently makes the case against intervention in China's internal affairs, of which he strongly disapproved. He does not, however, represent the Taipings as a force which would certainly prevail unless the scales were turned against it by foreign intervention. Writing in 1856, before Tseng Kuo-fan's victories over the Taipings, he does not go further than to say that "the best informed of us cannot possibly form a reliable conclusion, but that the struggle, end as it may, will certainly be hard." He clearly perceived the growing resistance that the Taipings had raised up against themselves by their intolerant hostility towards all the existing religions of China, and though he does not predict their ultimate defeat, he indicates the main cause which was to produce it in his remark that any faction with as much military strength as the Taipings had had when they took Nanking could not have failed to overthrow the Manchu dynasty if it had been Confucianist as well as anti-Manchu.

G. F. Hudson

II

IT IS well known that in many parts of Asia conditions of land tenure are highly oppressive. Asian political leaders, of course, were aware of this long before the Communists appeared on the scene—the example of Sun Yat-sen comes to mind. Nor was non-Asian concern for the Asian peasant limited to any particular political outlook. English social scientists, Tory, Liberal, and Socialist, pioneered in the critical appraisal of rural India. And the American general, Douglas MacArthur, whose conservative leanings are beyond question, came to see the urgency of the land issue in Japan better than some professing radicals.

In pre-Communist China, the social anthropologist, Dr. Hsiao-tung Fei, was one of those who clearly understood the need for agrarian reform. His recently published book, *China's Gentry*,* demonstrates clearly that his desire was not only to analyse but also to improve the conditions of the Chinese peasants. The seven essays which comprise this book originally appeared in Chinese newspapers in 1947 and 1948. Fei translated them into English and reworked them in the fall of 1948, when the Communist victory was all but certain.

Fei was trained in China, England, and the U.S.A.; but in contrast to a number of similarly educated Chinese, he was not a Marxist-Leninist. The "masters" he revered were the "White" Russian anthropologist, Shirokogoroff, the Polish-born English anthropologist, Malinowski, and the American sociologist, Robert E. Park. In his first book, *Peasant Life in China*, published in London in 1939, he applied insights gained from these and other teachers to the study of Chinese village life.

While Fei was impressed by the land reform which the Chinese Communists had at that time initiated in Kiangsi, he did not believe that the Chinese peasants were attracted to Communism as such. Nor did he want a Communist-led revolution. Instead he urged a "reasonable and effective land reform," which, because it would improve the lot of the peasants, would eliminate the conditions for rural revolt. He neither envisaged nor recommended the nationalisation of agriculture. He even objected to a big and concentrated Chinese industry. In many ways, he was closer to Gandhi than to Marx and Lenin.

During the Second World War, Fei spent a number of years in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. The south-western environment provided him with new opportunities for rural research; and the strained economy of war-torn China heightened his interest in a policy of broad and bold reform. Fei's frank utterances aroused strong sympathy and equally strong

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* *China's Gentry. Essays in Rural-Urban Relations.* By HSIAO-TUNG FEI. Revised and edited by Margaret Park Redfield, with Six Life-Histories of Chinese Gentry Families collected by Yung-teh Chow and an Introduction by Robert Redfield. Cambridge University Press. 43s. 6d.

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hostility. He was shot at during a public meeting; and his friends feared for his freedom. But he was not arrested. The Nationalist government permitted him to go to America and to complete his Yunnan studies, which appeared in the United States in 1945 under the title *Earthbound China*.

This book shows Fei very critical of the Nationalist government, but in no way ready to accept the Communist programme. As in 1939, he saw the future of the Chinese village linked definitely to an improved peasant economy, and even more insistently than in 1939 he recommended that a decentralised industry be developed in the Chinese countryside. He also believed that "a large organisation which will coordinate the small manufacturing units is necessary for the new rural industry of China." This suggests that Fei was influenced by socialist concepts, and, as a matter of fact, Dr. Robert Redfield, the distinguished American anthropologist, tells us that Fei was at that time "interested in American democracy and in English socialism."

After the end of the Second World War, Fei resumed his academic work at his old university, Tsinghua, near Peiping. He was still there in 1948, when the Communists with increasing success turned their weapons against Chiang Kai-shek. According to Dr. Redfield, who left the city only a few weeks before the Communists seized it, Fei translated and rewrote his essays on the gentry while "Peiping was ringed by Communist forces, and the fall of the universities and of the city itself was expected within a very short time." Fei dictated the new draft to Mrs. Redfield "hastily, with enthusiasm, and in the tense anticipation of the coming of Communist control." He felt enthusiasm because he thought he would be able to work with the Communists. At the same time he was apprehensive. Realising that many differences separated him from the Communists, he saw himself as a member of the new régime's "loyal opposition."

IN *China's Gentry*, Fei continued to stress the need for a thorough-going land reform; but he did not accept the Communist analysis of Chinese society. This analysis rejected the classical interpretation of Asian politics (echoed by Marx himself) as being dominated by "Oriental despotism"—i.e. great bureaucratic monarchies with a semi-managerial character. This is understandable; from the standpoint of the Communist system, no concept that by implication views a functional bureaucracy as the ruling class can be tolerated. And although Marx's adherence to the classical concept of Oriental despotism was a complicating factor, the Soviet leaders succeeded in discarding this dangerous notion. The Chinese Communists were quick to accept the Soviet theory, which, denying the proven historical reality of a specific, static, state-dominated "Asiatic" order, claims that in China, as in Europe, society was dominated by private owners, at first by slave-owners and later by feudal landlords.

Fei, on the other hand, insisted that, in the third century B.C., China moved from a feudal to a despotic order, which lasted until the beginning of the 20th century, that is, for more than two millenniums. He also insisted that during this period societal leadership was based not on the control of landed property, but on the exercise of state power. Already in 1939 Fei had stressed the fragmentative effect of the Chinese law of inheritance upon landholding; and he did so again in 1945. In China, he observed, government office rather than agricultural or industrial property produced wealth: "Through power to wealth." And he expressed doubts regarding the magnitude of large estates in traditional China. "Compared to areas farmed in the West, even the amounts of land held by so-called 'wealthy landlords' tend to be insignificant."

Fei visualised the Chinese gentry as comprising three groups: retired officials, relatives of officials, and educated landlords. And since he considered government office the main road to landlordism, his third group may be taken to be primarily derived from the first and second. In his analysis, the gentry is essentially a bureaucratic gentry, as juxtaposed to the landed gentry of the feudal and post-feudal West.

Despite these heretical views, Fei awaited the coming of the Communists with high hopes. And after they established their dominance, he wrote in praise of the "New Democracy." Soon he was singled out for unusual honouring: Mao Tse-tung talked with him face to face. Was it during this conversation that Mao ordered Fei to concentrate his researches on urban reconstruction, and to stop busying himself with the gentry, which the Communists

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understood better than he? Rumour has it so. In any case, Fei was given a place on various government boards and committees. But he was kept out of the villages, which in the past he had studied so intensely.

It is now almost five years since the Communists established their rule over the Chinese mainland. Everywhere they initiated their régime by distributing land to landless and poor peasants. The beneficiaries of this policy formed a corps of political activists that enabled the Communists to establish tight control over the villages. But power for some does not mean welfare for all. In his essays of 1947–48 Fei stated that the redistribution of the land would benefit the new landholders only if they could keep a larger share of their crop than they had done under conditions of tenancy. Did this happen after the Communists came to power? At the very beginning, it may have. The Communist land tax was probably lower than the rent ordinarily asked by the landlords. In this respect then, former tenants and part-tenants profited immediately. But, for obvious reasons, a change from rent payments to tax payments brought no relief to those peasants who already were owners, and in Nationalist China about 24 per cent of all peasants were half-owners, and about 46 per cent owned all the land they tilled. Furthermore, the new Communist régime soon imposed new burdens, especially the purchase of grain at low prices fixed by the government, and these fell on all peasants, no matter what their former proprietary position had been. From the scattered information at hand, and especially from the denunciations and exhortations in official directives, it seems that the peasants are by no means content with their new situation, and that a perpetual agrarian problem may well plague the régime, as it has in Russia.

While all this has been happening, Fei has been living in Communist China. His position is high, his voice low. If he reads the foreign press, which as a prominent official he may be able to do, he must have some thoughtful moments. What, one wonders, were his reactions to the United Nations survey of 1953 which showed that, in Japan's villages, consumption had surpassed the pre-war level by some 25 per cent—and this as a result of a land reform imposed by General MacArthur! It is not likely we shall ever have an answer to this question, or others. Fei stopped writing to his friends immediately after the Communists seized power; and his statements since that time do not necessarily express his innermost feelings. But having known him personally, I consider it more than likely that in the depth of his heart he comprehends fully the tragedy which has overwhelmed him and his country.

Karl A. Wittfogel

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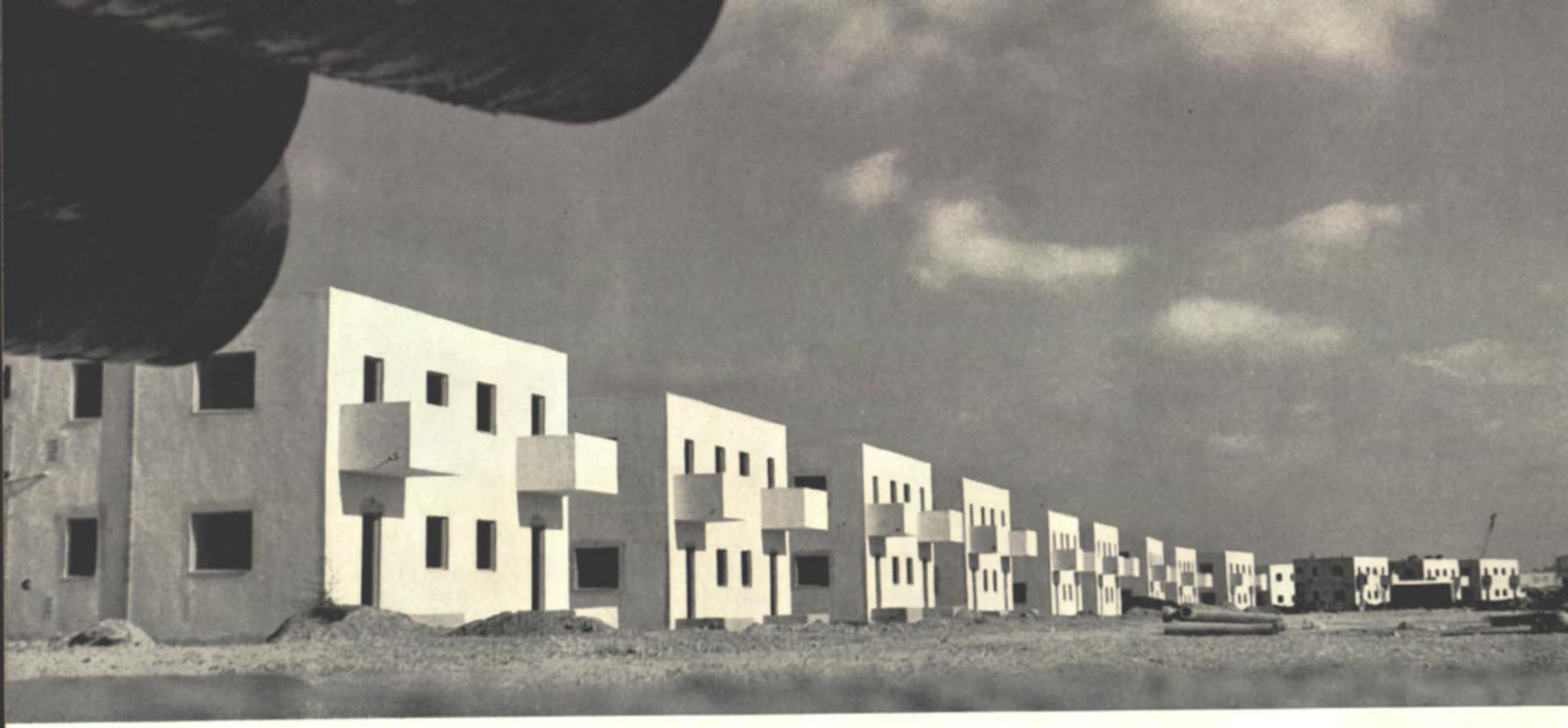

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